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ABSTRACT

Historical information concerning liberal studies education at Amherst College and proposals for academic programs are considered. Topics include the following: a chronology of curriculum reform at Amherst, the special character of the freshman and sophomore years, and divisions of the curricula, distribution scheme, majoring and taking electives, interdisciplinary courses, collaborative teaching, and the laboratory or seminar method of teaching. A proposal for a program of special courses for freshmen, a proposal of a new program (the adjunct program) for upperclassmen, the role of the major program and honors, recommendations for academic advising, and broader implications of the curriculum recommendations are considered. Appended materials include the report of the task force on freshman seminars, an alternate proposal, and reports and related documents of the Curriculum Committee, 1937-39. (SW)

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EDUCATION AT AMHERST Reconsidered

The Liberal Studies Program

Lawrence A. Babb
Elizabeth W. Bruss
Hugh Hawkins
William M. Hexter, Chairman
Mark A. Peterson
Joel M. Upton

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CONTENTS

Preface	vii
Acknowledgments	xiii
Historical Introduction	1
The Freshman Year	33
The Adjunct Program	57
The Major and Honors	66
Academic Advising	70
The Curriculum and the Institution	74
Motions	83
Appendix 1: Some Demographic Thoughts	87
Appendix 2: Report of the Task Force on Freshman Seminars	91
Alternate Proposal	101
The Curriculum Committee, 1937–39: Reports and Related Documents	107

4

PREFACE

ALEXANDER MEIKLEJOHN, the eighth president of Amherst College, is important in the historical life of the College because of his unfailing insistence that "making minds" was the essence of the College's purpose. He constantly stressed the central place of intellectual understanding in the College. On this, as well as on other matters, he had his critics. In one essay, he imagined the argument of his opponents:

> Boys should be prepared for life . . . not for the reading of books or the spinning of theories. Education should be practical; by it bodies should be strengthened, friendships should be established, manners should be acquired, spirits should be purified, appreciations should be enriched and directed, the will should be fortified and inspired and subjugated, all the powers of body, mind and soul should be so trained and correlated that from them shall be made such a man as a man should be.

It was not that Mr. Meiklejohn was hostile to the estimable goods which his critics valued. It was that he feared the College might, in pursuing many other good purposes, lose sight of its essential purpose, learning. He wished to keep clearly at the center of the College's vision of itself that it was "a place of understanding, to fashion minds. . . . That is the aim that leads us on."

Interestingly, Mr. Meiklejohn went on to say, "Of course, to gaze at such a goal as this is dreaming; of course, one knows that such a vision will never be made true. . . . The task cannot be done but still it must be done."

How does Amherst College today live up to the educational vision and the skeptical courage of the past? How do we persist in acting upon our ideals, our outrageous hopes for the best which education at Amherst College may properly achieve, and yet preserve a decent modesty and a saving skepticism about ourselves, about Amherst College?

"The Report of the Select Committee on the Curriculum," completed last year and adopted with some revisions in its particulars by the Faculty on May 10, 1977, provides an answer. The Report speaks for itself, of course, but there are still some things which may be said about it. The first is the modest hope that anyone who cares for Amherst College will read it; immodestly, the hope that anyone who cares for liberal education will read it.

Today, open the doors of any decent college or university, and one will find a curriculum committee at work. The historian may wonder why, may muse about causes which are external to education itself, but there are also intrinsic causes. There is, to be sure, force to the argument that the movement away from requirements and a highly structured curriculum in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a manifestation in education of a social movement which held authority and order in low repute. But far more was involved than the turbulence of social protest against racism in American society or a savage war in Southeast Asia, or more than the demand for instant gratification by a generation shaped by the mass media into perfect consumers. There was, in the best places, honest dubiety about the ends and the means of liberal education.

The central dilemma, to put it oversimply, is that the achievement of true competence in any field of knowledge requires concentration and study in depth. But the specialization implicit in that fact runs counter to the honored goal of breadth and broad acquaintance with the life of the mind as essential to liberal education. The dilemma is made more acute because of the absence of any consensus among learned faculty, honestly concerned with the question, about what subjects, or what books, or what areas of knowledge might constitute breadth in liberal education. That is to say, the unwillingness to prescribe was not a failure of nerve among professors. It was a consequence of knowledge itself: the increasing demand in nearly every field for greater mastery along special lines to a degree which threatens the possibility of shared discourse even within traditional fields of knowledge, let alone between and among them; the inclusion of histories and literatures and traditions which a Eurocentric

provincialism left before left unattended; the development of new perspectives and techniques which quickly consolidated themselves into new fields of study and new departments. In sum, the implosion and the explosion of fields of knowledge, accompanied by a remarkable widening of cultural and historical awareness, left in shreds the easy assumptions which underlay the ancient ideal of special competence in depth and liberal education in breadth.

Faculties could at least doff their hats to the ideal of competence by preserving the departmental major, and be saved the embarrassment of inquiring too closely whether it achieved its stated end. But faculties everywhere retreated from core curricula, common programs, specific requirements. The only tattered remnant which remained was the requirement that a student must take at least one or two courses in each of the three modern divisions of knowledge (Science, Social "Science," and the Humanities), although no one dared ask what a sequence of courses, say, in genetics, the politics of the Jacksonian period, and the English novel between two world wars meant for the liberal education of a particular student.

The faculty continued to pay obeisance to the ideal of knowing more than one thing well because they knew that to know only one thing is finally to know nothing. More than a century ago, John Stuart Mill argued that one could not be a good political economist if one knew only political economy. Or, a good anything else, one might add. The observation is a truism because it is true, still true a century later. Faculty continue to insist upon it, but for good and respectable intellectual reasons cannot come to an agreement on how to realize the ideal in a particular arrangement of the curriculum.

It was within this troubled context that the Select Committee on the Curriculum set about its work. As foreshortened as my description may be, one must take the context into account to judge the final product, the finished work of the Select Committee, its Report. I think the best compliment one may pay the Select Committee is negative: it did not fall into the trap of seeking order for order's sake. The Committee did not impose upon students a set of mechanical requirements simply to rid the

faculty of nagging questions which are troubling.

More positively, and more to the point, The Report of the Select Committee on the Curriculum, given in the following pages, is noteworthy, I think, in three respects. First, it is true to the traditions of Amherst College; it builds upon the past. Second, it is manifestly a report written by people who know what it means to teach, what good teaching is. Third, it accepts the need of students for guidance and direction from the faculty, but puts the burden on the faculty, not upon the students.

It is important that the Report of the Committee begins with a long historical account of the curriculum at Amherst College since its founding. The intention, clearly, is to propose a change for the future as an extension of the past. The importance of the intention should not be overlooked. Higher education in the United States today consists of more than 3,000 degree-granting institutions. With such numbers, one might imagine immense variety, but that is not the case. Far too readily, institutions play follow-the-leader and copy arrangements alien to their own experience and style. One need only remember the dominance of the Harvard Redbook on general education, or the rapid replication of Columbia University's core in Western Civilization to realize the danger of domination by the example of others.

The purpose of the freshman introductory courses, "Introduction to Liberal Studies," required of entering freshmen both terms of their first year, may be new, but the conduct of them is not. The emphasis on inter-disciplinary courses, taught by a team of faculty, the stress on small classes, the engagement with a question or a problem rather than the covering of material or the imparting of information: all these are congenial to traditional emphases in instruction at Amherst College. The Committee wisely knew that the best change was one which incorporated much of the past.

The second major virtue of the Report on the Curriculum is that it insists on what every good teacher knows, namely, that the intellectual life "at its heart is the asking of questions." The Report emphatically rejects the notion of the educated person as a "product" of teaching, so that one may evaluate the result and, hence, the effectiveness of the College in producing it. In full

awareness that other ends are served, to be sure, and that society may place a different meaning upon a degree as a certificate that one is "educated," the Report of the Select Committee insists upon the worth of education itself, for its own ends. The heart of the matter is the process itself. Education is an activity.

But what is this activity? As we know well, to attempt its definition is to invite cliché. Still, we do have a fairly clear idea of it. It is the effort to seek order where order cannot readily be seen, to establish connections between things not obviously connected. It is the attempt to discriminate within, and to create ordered representations of, the world of nature and the world of man. Its roots lie in insistent curiosity; its outcome takes the form of clarity where there was obscurity before. This activity is not peculiar to the academy. In it we recognize a capacity that is definitive of what it is to be a fully living human being. This activity, we must therefore say, is the highest part of human nature, and is at home in many callings other than the scholarly ones. Its symptoms are always and everywhere the same: a critical engagement with life, a willingness to examine the given and to question dogma, an ability to entertain novel ways of thinking.

Yet, the ideal needs to be realized, and the third estimable aspect of the Report on the Curriculum is that the Committee accepted the faculty's responsibility for that fact: "The faculty does have the obligation to create a setting in which the decisions made by students can be reasoned ones . . . a certain amount of regulation is necessary to foster the very freedom of choice we wish to encourage." The design of the curriculum flows from the faculty's responsibility. First, the development of a "critical sensibility" together with an awareness of the range of learning at Amherst College is to be achieved in the required "Introduction to Liberal Studies" upon entrance the first year. Second, electives are to have a pattern, not just randomness, so the student must in close consultation with his or her advisor select four courses (the "Adjunct" Program) outside the field of the major on the basis of a question or a theme. The student may then realize there are other and often personal ways to run lines of connection between intellectual experiences. Third, and fi-

nally, the responsibility for advising students in the planning of their educational experience falls to the entire faculty. It cannot be left to a few.

Perhaps the most interesting feature of the Report of the Select Committee is that it imposes little directly upon the individual student who still has a considerable area of latitude and choice within the general framework, but it imposes greatly upon the faculty. To staff the "Introduction to Liberal Studies Courses," to engage with the student in the design of the Adjunct Program, to be fully responsible to the advisory system: these ask much of the faculty. The test for a curricular program which is admirable in its premises and its design will obviously be the faculty's willingness to act upon the ideas which it has affirmed.

Finally, a modest conclusion: to the degree that Amherst College remains true to the worth of the process of education as its chief and central purpose, one may confidently predict that seven years hence there will be yet another committee on the curriculum seeking once again to discover new ways to embody a traditional ideal. Which is to say that the faculty's constant willingness to ask questions, just as in the education of students, is the heart of the matter, the ultimate measure of the worth of a good college devoted to the liberal education of young men and women.

JOHN WILLIAM WARD
President,
Amherst College

Amherst, Massachusetts
April 1978

10

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And finally, we wish to express our affection for and appreciation to Harlan Levy and Peter Schneider, student representatives to the committee. They faithfully attended every meeting and shared in every discussion and decision. This report is as much a part of them as it is of us.

LAWRENCE A. BABB
ELIZABETH W. BRUSS
HUGH HAWKINS
WILLIAM M. HEXTER
MARK A. PETERSON
JOEL M. UPTON

HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

OF THE MANY ways that a report recommending curricular change might begin, we have chosen a historical account of the Amherst College Curriculum. We realize that there are other acceptable openings: a specification of principles included in the complex ideal generally called "liberal education" or a delineation of recent changes in the world within which the College functions. Trusting that our views on both these matters are implicit in the full report, we have preferred to take as our point of departure the ongoing institution itself—a college seeking over time both to be true to certain educational ideals and to respond to the world around it. We consider both reliance on uncriticized myths about the institutional past, and the view that the past is irrelevant, to be dangerously constrictive. Accordingly, our historical introduction is not a declaration of conservatism, even though it shows, and is intended to show, that we regard our own deliberations as part of a continuing effort by members of Amherst College intelligently to adapt curricular means to the end of providing good education.

Our own experiences at the College, the generous advice of others who have been or are students and teachers here, the rich written record of other curricular committees—all these have heightened our awareness that it is this particular college whose curriculum we are considering. We have, of course, sought other vantage points. All of us have taught or studied at other colleges or universities, we have been attentive to the many curricular changes suggested or adopted at other institutions in the last two or three years, and we have read both classics and more recent scholarly and reflective works on education and the structure of knowledge.

These initial historical passages will, we hope, foreshadow much of the report that follows. Having examined our institu-

tional past, we now reject the model of a curricular pendulum that swings predictably back and forth between prescription and free election, and between emphasis on distribution and emphasis on concentration. Instead, we find ourselves comfortable with a rather old-fashioned cumulative or progressive interpretation of Amherst's curricular history. We discovered no curricular report that has not in some important way advanced education at the College, and we realize that earlier committees built on the work of their predecessors very much as we are doing. Of course, the record includes both failed flights of curricular fancy that, while stimulating debate, could not be institutionalized, and the opposite: some curricular patterns that have persisted without examination, treated as inherent in the nature of knowledge or the nature of humankind, when they were merely organizational conveniences. Still, with allowances for the evanescent and the rigid, the continuing significance of the reasoning of earlier curricular committees has evoked from us a deepening respect. A brief, necessarily selective survey of their work seems an honest way to begin the presentation of our own.

It would be naive of course to reduce Amherst's curricular development to the record of formal reports. As faculty members at least are well aware, much of curricular change comes through informal discussions and ad hoc decisions. Every curricular plan adopted by the faculty has undergone gradual modification in practice. The reports, however, have served to bring the community's general thinking into more fully reasoned and accessible form. The strategy of this introduction is, first, to give a bare-boned chronology of these reports, then to trace some persisting themes that merit careful attention in the College's present curricular reassessment.

Changing the Amherst Curriculum: A Chronology

Amherst College provided American higher education with one of its first faculty curricular reports. In fact, two such reports, criticizing the status quo and recommending reforms were published by order of Amherst's Trustees in 1826, when the College was only five years old. The principal faculty recommendation,

that a parallel course of study be established, allowing students an alternative to the traditional classical course, was put into effect in 1827. Under the new arrangement, students could choose between two courses to the Bachelor of Arts degree, each including only required studies. The new course, partly inspired by arguments that the traditional course served only those preparing to enter the three learned professions, substituted modern languages for ancient, and it was proposed, at least, to offer more work in physics, biology, history, and government. This "parallel course" was ended after two years. Among explanations that have been offered for its demise are the additional workload placed on the faculty, the paucity of students willing to sacrifice the prestige of classical learning, and the general impression that the plan was more the brainchild of a single faculty member than the offspring of shared faculty wisdom and will.

In 1829, Amherst retreated completely from curricular innovation, and for many years thereafter cleaved to a single required curriculum. When William A. Stearns became president in 1854, there was only one option among all the course offerings: third-term sophomores could enroll in either French or German. In 1859–60, several elective studies were established for third-term seniors, but more dramatic elective advances awaited the administration of Julius H. Seelye (1876–1890). By 1886, juniors and seniors were allowed to choose more than half their studies.

The presidency of George Harris (1899–1912) saw the first peak of electivism at Amherst: for a time, three-fourths of a student's choices were free electives (neither specifically required, nor chosen within a scheme of distribution, nor part of a major). Under pressure for more intellectual rigor, brought to a head by a report of the class of 1885 issued in 1910, the College sharply limited students' free election and abolished its longstanding B.S. degree, notable for requiring no study of ancient languages. President Alexander Meiklejohn (1912–1924), though unsympathetic with the earlier elective program, believed that the new requirements were unbalanced. He argued especially that natural science and foreign languages were too prominent in the 1911 curriculum, and that students needed channeling into "the humanistic sciences" (a category in which he included philoso-

phy, history, economics, government, and religion). Although it did in 1914 vote some curricular changes that moved in the direction suggested, the faculty under Meiklejohn never agreed to certain of his other proposals, such as dividing the institution into a "Junior College," culminating in general examinations, and a "Senior College," largely devoted to more specialized inquiry (*Report of the President to the Trustees for 1914*, pp. 11, 20–21; ibid. for 1918, pp. 33, 36–37, 40–41).

Although a standing faculty committee, called successively the Committee on Curriculum and the Committee on Instruction and chaired by the president, appeared as early as 1899, it seems to have been more a housekeeping body than an innovating one. When President Stanley King (1932–1946) took office, he obtained abolition of virtually all faculty committees, joining their functions in the new Committee of Six, and himself took the lead in the removal of ancient language as a freshman year requirement. But in the spring of 1937, the faculty decided to establish a permanent Curriculum Committee, composed of three faculty members appointed by the Committee of Six. (Its members in 1937–38 were Otto Glaser [chairman], Theodore Baird, and Charles W. Cole; in 1938–39, George Rogers Taylor replaced Professor Cole.) Largely through the work of this new body, the years 1937–39 witnessed a quickened pace of curricular change. (For relevant documents, see appendix.) Recommendations shaped by the committee and discussed in informal sessions under the aegis of the Faculty Club, were channeled to the formal faculty meeting through the Committee of Six. Notable were the establishment of distribution through the new device of three curricular divisions, in each of which freshmen and sophomores were required to take courses; introduction of new freshman courses (departmentally based); an increase of twenty percent in the number of courses required for the major; encouragement of interdepartmental majors; and the institution of reading periods in some courses.

On this rising wave of academic concern—not, as is often assumed, in a period of quiescence—President King in October, 1941, appointed a "Faculty Committee on Long Range Policy." Interrupted by the outbreak of war, the committee was reconsti-

tuted in February, 1944, with Professor Gail Kennedy as chairman, and issued its report in January, 1945. Although its mandate was broad and it considered such matters as fraternities, church attendance, and scholarships, the FCLRP (not, one need hardly say, the way contemporaries referred to it) believed the curriculum its central concern. Most of its recommendations, including a required core of precisely specified courses for freshmen and sophomores, were adopted at a faculty meeting in October, 1945. The new program went into effect for the class that entered in 1947.

The FCLRP recommended greater responsibilities for the standing Curriculum Committee, which was accordingly renamed the Committee on Educational Policy and enlarged. The CEP issued progress reports on the new freshman program in 1948–49 and on the new sophomore program in 1949–50. But after seven years of the "New Curriculum," a more ambitious reappraisal was undertaken by a special "Review Committee on the New Program," also chaired by Professor Kennedy. Explaining the origin and gradual adaptation of the program, the review committee recommended no major changes. Its report was appended to that of 1945, and both were published as *Education at Amherst: The New Program* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1955), edited by Gail Kennedy.

Certain dissatisfactions with the program, noted by the review committee, continued to mount. Indeed, the plan included some unusual stringencies: the large number of classroom hours required of freshmen, the high proportion of specifically required courses, the limits during the first two years on free election and preliminary testing of potential majors. Rising student and faculty complaints led to the creation in 1958 of a select committee comparable in structure to the FCLRP, chaired by Professor Theodore Koester. Again the core curriculum was judged sound, but the committee recommended a considerable "opening up" of the sophomore year and a strengthening of independent projects in the major for both honors and *rite* degree candidates. The recommendation for a new calendar with a five-week term placed between two thirteen-week terms proved unattractive to many faculty members, and though the committee's program was

voted "in principle" in May, 1959, the calendar on which much of the plan rested was defeated the following November. Only a few changes involving *rite* majors and honors degrees resulted from the committee's proposals.

After the debacle of 1959, the faculty came to feel that the Committee on Educational Policy was properly the source for general curricular reappraisal as well as minor readjustment. In accordance with this view, special attention was paid to the choice of members in April, 1963. A year later, this CEP, chaired by Professor Joseph Epstein, issued "A Report on the Curriculum of Amherst College." A large part of its recommended program, notably three "Problems of Inquiry" (PI) courses (in humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences, respectively) required of freshmen and sophomores, was adopted by the faculty in a series of meetings in February and March, 1965. The PI's were first taught in the fall of 1966.

In February, 1971, as part of a general self-reassessment of the College under the leadership of the "President's Advisory Committee on Long Range Planning," the Committee on Educational Policy, chaired by Professor Norman Birnbaum (and including student members since 1968), issued a report on the future of the curriculum. The report was addressed to the Advisory Committee, a body including trustees, administrative officers, and students, as well as faculty members, but copies were sent directly to the faculty with a covering letter. Recommending abolition of the Problems of Inquiry courses, the CEP asked for new emphasis on students' designing of their own curricula, a process to be aided by required freshman proseminars, in addition to which each freshman would take three out of a group of new general and interdisciplinary "Inquiry" courses.

The year 1971 turned out to be one of the most complicated and agonized in the College's curricular history. In April, the President's Advisory Committee brought out its interim report (final version in May), calling for a curriculum considerably less structured than the one envisioned by the CEP. After inconclusive debate on dropping the PI's and the distribution requirement, the faculty adopted a resolution (May 18), carefully rephrased on the floor of the faculty to straddle a number of issues.

It described the faculty as looking "with sympathy on the educational philosophy implicit" in the Advisory Committee's proposals and asked the CEP to bring forward specific proposals in the fall to implement that philosophy.

When the fall semester began, the College had a new president, Professor John William Ward, and the CEP a new chairman, Professor John Ratté. Early in December, the CEP formally proposed a program of required freshman seminars, required junior colloquia, and "self-designed" majors as an alternative to traditional departmental majors. The PI courses and the distribution requirement were to be dropped. In a close vote on December 7, the faculty defeated the bellwether freshman seminar proposal. After a week of hectic caucusing and consulting, the faculty met again on December 14 and —considerably broadening a motion drawn up jointly by the CEP and the Committee of Six—voted to postpone for two years "the consideration of integrated curricular proposals," thus launching an "interim," during which "colloquia, freshman seminars, and multiple variants of courses to be called Inquiry" were to be offered as electives, with the PI's and the distribution requirements dropped. A vestigial foreign language requirement was eliminated in February, 1973, and required physical education in March, 1974.

This interim period of experimentation proved longer than the two years originally assigned it in the faculty vote. A CEP proposal to link continued wide elective choice to required statements by students of their educational goals failed of adoption in April, 1974. In May, 1975, the CEP, then chaired by Professor Donald O. White, issued a "Report to the College for the Academic Year 1974–75," which had more far-reaching implications than its title implied. Stressing the record since 1972 of voluntary student course distribution among three curricular divisons and the continuing educational possibilities of elective freshman seminars and colloquia, the report said:

> The C.E.P. does not intend to propose, nor would it like to see imposed, any system of requirements or any kind of core curriculum at the present time. We feel from neither students nor faculty the desire to organize Amherst College's intellectual life in ways strikingly different from those in which it is now conducted; nor

> do we find in ourselves or our colleagues the outlines of a comprehensive new educational program that is so compelling as to warrant its requirement.

Formal debate on the report was postponed until the fall. At a meeting in November, 1975, the faculty declined to endorse the committee's conclusion "that the Amherst curriculum is in its present condition basically sound." Instead, the faculty adopted a substitute motion "that the Committee of Six shall appoint a Special Committee of the Faculty to propose an alternative curriculum for Amherst. The Special Committee will report to the Faculty no later than two years from the time of its appointment." The result was the appointment of the "Select Committee on the Curriculum" and the creation of the present report.

The Special Character of the Freshman and Sophomore Years

As the elective system spread in the upper years, the Amherst faculty of the late nineteenth century at first held to the principle that work in the first two years should remain specifically required. Later, as the sophomore year also began to include course options, the freshman year became the bastion of course requirement.

The curricular modifications of 1937–39, however, introduced a new range of choice into the freshman year. No specific courses were to be required of freshmen (aside from fractional courses in public speaking and physical education); rather, they and sophomores were to be largely directed by a new scheme of curricular divisions, on the basis of which some work must be taken in each of three categories. The change responded to the claims of the "newer fields" for earlier recognition, and the argument that juniors and seniors chose more wisely if they had been required to examine a wide variety of subjects as freshmen and sophomores. Some departments now offered freshman courses for the first time, and new "introductory" courses designed with freshmen in mind were established in American government, classical civilization, music, fine arts, and anthropology.

A Guide to Proposals to Revise the Amherst College Curriculum

Date of Principal Report	*Proposing Agency*	*Chairman*	*Outcome*
November, 1938	Curriculum Committee	Otto Glaser	The 1939 Curriculum
January, 1945	Faculty Committee on Long Range Policy	Gail Kennedy	The 1947 ("New") Curriculum
1954	Review Committee on the New Program	Gail Kennedy	
March, 1959	Curriculum Review Committee	Theodore Koester	
April, 1964	Committee on Educational Policy	Joseph Epstein	The 1966 Curriculum
February, 1971	Committee on Educational Policy	Norman Birnbaum	
May, 1971	President's Advisory Committee on Long Range Planning	George E. Peterson (Trustee)	
December, 1971	Committee on Educational Policy	John E. Ratté	"Interim"
May, 1975	Committee on Educational Policy	Donald O. White	

The report of 1945 strongly reinforced the notion of the specialness of the first two years, which it distinguished as the "lower college." The FCLRP declared as one of its "principles": "During the first two years the student should be primarily concerned with the continuation of his general education" (p. 39). Among the justifications for this plan, perhaps none has remained more alive in faculty and alumni memories than the claim that "a common body of knowledge plays an essential part in the creation of an intellectual community" (p. 48).

The report met immediate objections based on the view that it was the freshman year alone, not the first two, that should be specially set apart. In the faculty meeting that voted for the "New Curriculum" in October, 1945, the principal opposition appeared in efforts to restrict the projected required courses to the freshman year. By 1954, the review committee found itself reluctantly assenting to the replacement of some of the single required courses for sophomores with choice controlled by a distribution rule. The 1959 report, while asserting that basic courses were properly required of all freshmen, endorsed only minimal specific course prescription thereafter (p. 17). The Epstein committee called in 1964 for "a four-year continuity"; rather than ending with the sophomore year, a "core curriculum" (largely of the individual student's design) should carry over the four undergraduate years (p. 14). The committee's plan as originally proposed, with a required course in the junior year and eleven courses devoted to distributional sequences, did indeed move far from any sense of "lower college" and "upper college." The curriculum actually adopted, however, which reduced the range of distribution and eliminated the required junior course, gave the impression that general education was a matter for the first two years.

The 1971 CEP report, giving no hint of a lower college-upper college organization, emphasized the special nature of the freshman year, calling for a required proseminar during the first semester with "its first concern the exploration of educational possibilities at Amherst" (p. 7), and a group of courses called "Inquiry," from among which freshmen would be required to

take three. These "would introduce our incoming students to academic work in such a way as to emphasize the problematical nature and general implications of work in a liberal arts college" (p. 10). In fact, the 1971 report set the last three years of the college course apart with the label "upper division." Although the 1975 CEP opposed course prescription, its stress on the beneficial "introductory" influence of elective freshman seminars also suggested that the freshman year might have a special curricular identity.

Divisions

Perhaps there is no better example at Amherst of the reification of a curricular device than the development of the idea that "all curricula are divided into three parts." During the opening workshop sponsored by the Select Committee on the Curriculum (SCC), surprise and disbelief were expressed in response to the observation that the divisions had been instituted at Amherst only in 1939. At that time, the language chosen by the Curriculum Committee had suggested a loose grouping device, a convenient frame for student distribution. The committee spoke of "three broad groups," and the label for each group included more than one substantive: "Mathematics and Natural Science," "Social Studies and Philosophy," and "Language, Literature, and the Arts." These divisions were welcomed as an alternative to Amherst's loose electivism of the mid-1930's (see table on p. 12), and the rule concerning course continuity. Under this rule, students in their last three years had been required to take two-fifths of each year's work in two subjects studied the previous year. The rule, which seems on its face frustratingly rigid, had been instituted in 1935. According to the Curriculum Committee of 1938, which initiated its abolition, it was not without merit: "By forcing students and their advisors to consider each program in its entirety while discussing the elections for a given year, this mechanical device has had highly salutary effects" (p. 6). But though it accepted curricular divisions, the faculty in 1939 chose not to adopt proposed language which suggested considerably

Free Election and Requirement in the Amherst College Curriculum

(Percent of courses required for the B.A., approximated from Catalog Statements)

Year	*% Free Election*	*% Major*	*% Required Distribution*	*% Required Specific Courses[a] (Included in Required Distribution)*
1875–76	15		85	(85)
1885–86	38		62	(62)
1895–96	56		44[b]	(38)
1905–06	75	—[c]	25[d]	(20)
1915–16	35	30[e] (two majors)	45	(20)
1925–26	40	30[e] (two majors)	40	(15)
1935–36	45	15[f]	55[f]	(0)[g]
1945–46	45	25[h]	40	(5)
1955–56	29	23	48	(25)
1966–67 (plan adopted 1965)	44	25	31	(9)
1975–76	75	25	0	(0)

[a] Choices limited to Greek and Latin, or to French and German, are counted as specific requirements. In no case has a foreign language *proficiency* requirement been counted.

[b] Only one study was a requirement met by a "distributional" choice: one of four studies in the sophomore year was to be mathematics or a natural science.

[c] There was no major, but to be eligible for "Final Honors," a student was required to take four semester courses in a single department—9% of all course work.

[d] Required distribution, apart from specific courses, consisted in freshmen's choice of two courses out of a list of eleven.

[e] There is a 10% overlap of the major with either courses taken as distribution requirements in the sophomore year or with free electives of the last two years. This overlap explains the total of 110%.

[f] In each of the last three years, students were required to take two year-long

more coherence within these groupings. It deleted the portion of a resolution which read: "that each group of studies shall include courses broad in scope and by the nature of their subject matter and treatment, suitable as introductions in the field of knowledge and experience covered by each of the three major curricular divisions" (Faculty Minutes, January 23, 1939).

Eager to reinforce the recently defined divisions as a way of counteracting departmental narrowness, the FCLRP in 1945 referred to them as "three basic foci of interest" and as "great divisions" (pp. 27–28). It was the 1945 report which initiated the use of the term "humanities" to represent one of the divisions, though reluctantly ("a somewhat battered term, if not without meaning, which we retain for convenience to include literature, philosophy, and the arts" [p. 55]). The committee, recognizing that divisions could themselves cause undesirable narrowing, did not want them to become an organizational form for the faculty (which might require divisional deans, divisional meetings, etc.). Pointing out that some majors and some of the proposed new core courses crossed divisional lines, the committee urged that "everything that can be done to establish connections, not disconnections, between all parts of the curriculum should be encouraged" (p. 158).

The review committee of 1954 found that strain had been imposed by the supposed obligation of the required core courses to introduce students to "divisions" and to represent every department within a division. Similarly uneasy about divisions, the 1959 committee chose its words as if to avoid treating the divisions as universals: e.g., "We conceive [the major concerns of a

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courses in two subjects in which courses were taken the preceding year. This "continuity" requirement has been counted here as a distributional requirement. In most cases, courses taken to give continuity also constituted the major; hence the total of 115%.

[a] Throughout this table, the required fractional course in public speaking, generally a third or a fourth of a regular course, has not been counted. Since in 1935–36 a "one-hour" course in public speaking was required of freshmen, the figure of "0" here might better be rendered "1." Similarly, fractional physical education and hygiene courses, though usually required, have not been counted.

[b] A 10% overlap of the major and distribution requirement was probable.

liberal arts college] to include, especially, an awareness of the cultural tradition of which the student is a part, an understanding of the functioning of the society in which he lives, and a more accurate conception than he may previously have acquired of the nature of scientific inquiry" (p. 24).

The CEP that reported in 1964, after struggling to free itself from the assumption "that all curricula are divided into three parts," insisted that divisions were necessary: one object of a curriculum was to make "distinctions which it is the function of a liberal education to traverse" (pp. 21–22). Although the committee specified that the Problems of Inquiry courses would stand outside all divisions (p. 23), PI's I, II, and III bore the same names as the divisions, and the faculty did not agree to require the fourth PI—"Composition of Knowledge." Accordingly, the three required courses were almost inevitably interpreted as introductions to the three divisions. The committee's rather elaborate distributional proposals were based on these divisions, and it was necessary for even an interdisciplinary major to be assigned to a division (pp. 26–27). In practice, the 1966 curriculum made divisions more salient than ever before.

The CEP of 1970-71, on the basis of some of its members' skepticism about departments, considered, without finally recommending, a plan of six divisions (creative and performing arts, literary and linguistic studies, historical studies, social sciences, life sciences, and physical sciences), not as a basis for course distribution, but as a means of broadening majors, i.e., only "divisional majors" would be allowed (p. 5). Its suggested new freshman courses (to be called Inquiry) would presumably in some cases "cut across the boundaries between the present divisions" (p. 10), and there would be no divisional distribution required in choosing among these courses, though freshmen would have to take one in the laboratory sciences (p. 9). The faculty vote of December, 1971, which ended the PI courses and the distribution requirement, left divisions with little operational meaning. Still, they have persisted in the structuring of certain committees, in the way the Office of Institutional Research presents statistics on student enrollments, and as a grounding for student-advisor discussions of "breadth." The

CEP of 1975 could speak of "Division II" and "Division III" with no implication that the terms were anachronisms (p. 4).

Distribution

The foregoing discussion of divisions has necessarily included references to distribution, since divisions were created in the late 1930's as a replacement for what seemed more arbitrary ways to insist on range in students' studies. But the theory and practice of distribution at Amherst College merits a closer look. As inspection of the chart on page 9 will show, distribution was obtained through specifically required courses in the 1870's and 1880's; then the idea of distribution through choices from among grouped courses began a gradual growth, which by the 1930's left a curriculum with no specifically required courses. One of the most daring ideas of the 1945 report (and one that set it apart from other general education reforms of the post-World War II years) was its return to single courses which all students were required to take. Such constraints were continued, though much lessened quantitatively, by the curriculum that went into force in 1966. A practice which had been in tune with the stringencies of World War II and the Cold War was sorely resented in an era of liberation movements. Further, students felt already coerced by a draft law that made college studies an alternative to military service.

According to the original Kennedy committee, most distribution schemes in American higher education have been shams, created more out of vested academic interests than from a sense of educational essentials, and allowing too much selectivity (p. 23). The response of 1945—specific required courses—was not the only way to counteract this "looseness" of distribution schemes: an alternative was to require that sequences rather than single courses be elected. As a way of counteracting "scattering," the 1964 report recommended that the distribution requirement be made up of sequences of courses designed by departments. Each student was to take five such sequences (later reduced by the committee to three), at least one in each division. More important than the specific rule which the faculty adopted

was the committee's argument, in fact the central theme of its report, that a liberal arts college must guarantee the interaction of specialized knowledge and general discourse.

It has not, however, been fear of incoherence in student course selection that has been the principal argument for distribution requirements. More significant has been the effort to counter excessive specialization. Both the 1939 and 1947 curricula required that in the last two years of the student's course, work be taken outside the division in which the student's major lay. A change in this rule adopted in 1952 suggests the strength of tendencies toward specialization: thereafter, departmental representatives could waive such distribution at a student's request. Similar pressures, presumably heightened by Sputnik, explain a section of the 1959 report entitled "The Contemporary Emphasis on Science": "The present situation does not call for any drastic change in our policy of not permitting excessive specialization in science at the expense of other important concerns in a liberal arts college" (p. 16).

Although its suggested freshman program would have required an Inquiry course in a laboratory science, the CEP of 1970–71 recommended that existing distribution requirements be ended and that students work out with their advisors "satisfactory arrangements for breadth and depth in areas other than their immediate area of concentration . . . " (p. 12). Similarly inclined, the 1975 CEP opposed reinstituting distribution requirements. Discerning beneficial effects under the plan that assigned advisors from among a freshman's teachers, the committee concluded its discussion of distribution with language that seemed meant as an informal guide to students and advisors:

> . . . we expect that Amherst students, through frequent consultation with their advisors, will plan individual programs that combine the depth of intellectual mastery represented by the concentration of efforts in one field with the breadth provided by study in related and alien fields. We hope that in their four years at Amherst students will gain some understanding of other times and cultures while deepening their knowledge of their own; that they will experience the force of literary and artistic imagination; and that they will develop capacities for objective analysis and for clarity in written and oral expression while achieving an aware-

ness of the necessary role that emotions and moral commitments play in human affairs (p. 5).

Majoring

Although it had since about 1902 been part of the honors program for abler students, majoring first appeared at Amherst as a general graduation requirement in 1911, in a form that demanded of each student three majors (along with one minor). At that time the innovation presumably reflected the value placed on distribution and continuity in studies more than any new regard for the pursuit of single subjects in depth. The thrust of the requirement was changed somewhat when in 1914 it was reduced to two majors, and later to one. But in 1930 a rule forbade a student's taking more than four courses (twenty percent of all courses) in one subject, unless pursuing honors or having obtained special permission.

As part of its argument against a major of only three year-long courses (fifteen percent of a student's total course), the Curriculum Committee of 1937–38 cited "the classic case of a student who was majoring in English but did not know it," and added, "Usually the student is at least aware of his major. Frequently, the department is not." The major requirement was raised in 1938 from three to five year-long courses, departmental supervision of majors was strengthened, and new means were sought to encourage abler seniors to pursue independent projects. Beginning with the class that entered in 1938, "Latin" honors (the degree *cum laude*, etc.) was made dependent on such work and the passing of a departmental comprehensive examination (as well as the previously-controlling general grade average). Since this change, the major has remained fairly constant at one-fourth of a student's work, though more courses in the major have been possible as "free electives."

The original Kennedy committee, ready to change so much, declared the existing major and honors programs sound (pp. 40, 74). Besides completing students' general education, the committee observed, Amherst "prepares for graduate school the 'honors' students, the great majority of whom go on to some kind

of professional studies" (p. 40). *Rite* students, by contrast, appeared as an anomaly to be tolerated: Amherst should "become more and more of an honors college." Meanwhile, there was no point in diluting standards or expending great effort for little reward by insisting on "honors work for everybody" (pp. 76, 88, 173). Growing dissatisfaction with this attitude toward *rite* candidates was recognized by the 1954 review committee. In particular, their last years were not challenging enough. No very concrete remedies were recommended, however, and it was declared with satisfaction that only approximately ten percent of juniors and seniors were "genuine 'gut hoppers' " (p. 202).

The 1959 Curriculum Review Committee (CRC) approved the requirement of a major ("every student should come to know a particular subject in sufficient depth to give him the sense of what it means to master a given body of knowledge"), but found that in practice it had become too random. The CRC recommended vertical structuring within departments where appropriate, and for all students, an "area examination" and "at least one major effort of research and writing." On the other hand, since for some the major had become too narrowly specialized, it was suggested both that a maximum be set on the number of courses in any one department allowed to count toward a student's degree and that the thesis defense should be broadened to include contextual questions. A liberal arts college, after all, had different objectives from a graduate school (pp. 42–46). Although most of this committee's proposals did not win faculty approval, comprehensive examinations were made a college-wide requirement in 1960 (first applied to the class of 1962), and some departments announced their willingness to direct special projects undertaken by any major, including non-honors candidates.

Paralleling its view that general education was a matter of all four undergraduate years, the CEP of 1964 recommended that students be allowed to declare majors as early as they wished. The committee's report was sympathetic to the desires of "high school graduates with well established professional or vocational predilections" (p. 28). Considerably more reserved about the value of departments, the CEP of 1970–71 announced rather reluctantly its conclusion that departmental majors should con-

tinue; however, steps were suggested to make it easier for students to construct interdisciplinary majors "to put departments upon their mettle," and it was recommended that the number of courses a department could require of *rite* majors be reduced from eight to six (pp. 11–12). Though stopping short of recommendation, the committee considered allowing graduation through "a program of general studies without a major focus" (p. 14). Long remembered for its challenge to the "culture of slots," the President's Advisory Committee on Long Range Planning in its report of May, 1971, took the step the CEP had resisted: it recommended that the requirement of a major be dropped, with students' programs simply approved by the advisor and two other professors (p. I/4–5). In its proposals, the CEP of 1971–72, chaired by Professor Ratté, suggested that the requirement of a major should be continued, to be fulfilled either through a department or through "a program of courses selected by a student and his two advisors [from different departments] for a self-designed major," to include a comprehensive evaluation demonstrating the coherence of the program chosen.

The faculty vote of December, 1971, which ended specifically required courses and distributional requirements, ignored this proposal and left the major untouched. It was not generally foreseen that this gave the major (still defined as at least one-quarter of a student's work) much greater importance as virtually the only graduation requirement apart from residence, course completion, and grade average. In the wake of this modification of requirements, double majors increased and one student managed a triple major. The CEP of 1975 said very little about the major, which it clearly wanted continued. The committee did, however, include a spirited defense of the current honors policy (pp. 7–9).

Electivism

The principle of electivism, often considered the curricular counterpart of classical American Liberalism, has been a dominant concern in discussions of the course of study for more than a century. It is worth distinguishing, however, between the gen-

eral notion that students should make decisions about their college work (electivism), and the more special notion that students should choose among available courses without regard to institutionally imposed patterns (free election of courses). The development of free course election at Amherst is schematically presented in column 2 of the table on page 12. The paragraphs that follow here are concerned with the more general question of the role of electivism in curricular thinking at the College.

The new distribution plan of 1939 widened the variety of courses open to freshmen and ended the requirement of continuing from year to year work in subjects already studied. But the mild electivism of the Glaser committee was missing from the report of 1945. Indeed, that report ranks among the decidedly anti-electivist documents of American educational history. The highly structured, highly specific nature of the proposed curriculum suggested little sympathy for students' choosing of courses. The anti-electivist case was strongly put:

> Nothing is more in contradiction with the purpose of a liberal education than a curriculum composed of a large number of discrete and uncoordinated courses, all treated as if they were of equal importance. This kind of laissez-faire program is a confession of intellectual bankruptcy. That a faculty should not prescribe certain courses as an essential part of a liberal education is as if a physician should refuse to prescribe specifically for his patient on the ground that all the available remedies would undoubtedly have some effect. It is the elective system more than any other single thing that has led to the disconnected way of treating subjects which has done so much to destroy the vitality of our modern curriculum (p. 28).

The gradual moderation of the requirements instituted in 1945 suggests the latent power of electivist attitudes. Virtually every ad hoc change in graduation requirements during the next twenty years increased the range of choices open to students. The four-course system voted in 1945 was revoked in 1950, partly on the ground that the system of credit hours and varied course credit gave students "greater freedom of election" (1954 report, p. 201; 1959 report, pp. 7–8). In 1957–58, "Reading Courses" were added to the curriculum (today continued as "Special Topics"), allowing students to get course credit for a

program of individual reading supervised by a faculty member.

"How much of a student's work in college should be prescribed?" With this question, the Koester committee of 1958–59 began its evaluation of the 1947 curriculum (p. 8). By summarizing the New College plan of a contemporary Four-College committee (the plan from which Hampshire College emerged), the Koester committee made its own recommendations for greater electivism look modest indeed. Voicing the fear that course prescription was coming to be viewed as an end in itself, the committee urged readier permission to defer requirements, and occasional outright exemptions (pp. 32, 34–35). Although its proposed encroachment on the existing core curriculum was not great, the committee expressed a sympathetic view of electivism that forecast much of the curricular thinking of the next decade:

> . . . it is by the choices an undergraduate makes that he creates his identity as a student, and indeed in anything but an external sense, becomes a student. . . . Indeed, it may be held that the best measure of what a college has done for a particular student is the degree to which he has learned to recognize, use, and exploit the assets unique to his own intellectual abilities and personality (p. 38).

Although more effective in curtailing the number of courses specifically required, the report of 1964 was in some ways less electivist than that of 1959. The CEP of 1964 observed that students "shopped around, . . . often for the purpose of selecting courses which they hope will not make severe demands on them . . ." (pp. 16–17). Accordingly, the committee recommended abolition of Reading Courses and the reintroduction of the "four-course" system. But the justifications presented for the Problems of Inquiry courses and new distribution sequences suggested a distinctly electivist perspective:

> We propose a curriculum in which the student, not the college, decides on the core by facing the necessity to choose it for himself. He will not choose in a vacuum; at least his choice must be tested against the alternatives presented by the distribution requirement and by an increasing awareness of how his commitment is related to other forms of knowledge. But choose he must; the core must be his own (p. 14).

The high pitch of electivism in the CEP report of 1971 was consistent with the climax of an era of student protest, romantic individualism, and questioning of authority. Although granting that "the idea of a coherent curriculum reflecting the learned man's putative universe of discourse is not completely extinct," the report saw this idea as "struggling for its continued existence against other conceptions of higher education." Such alternatives were said to be clearly represented at Amherst—by the independent study and field study programs, Reading Courses, and current suggestions for the introduction of "Experiential Education." These programs, it was said, did in some cases lead to "traditional content," but they also led to notions of a very different kind of education. According to one of these notions, "the student . . . should be free to select from amongst the offerings of the College those that seem relevant to his personal purposes, or to his conception of the demands of the historical moment" (pp. 3–4). Amherst, in effect, had two curricula: a "traditional liberal arts curriculum," and "a variety of devices which assume cultural fragmentation and curricular pluralism." Seeking some new principle of ordering, the committee suggested a plan, but with considerable tentativeness: "the new curriculum ought to be the process of revising the old one." The committee hoped that after five or so years under its plan, the College might "devise more fixed and formalized new patterns of subject matter and teaching" (p. 7).

As matters turned out, the College entered a period even more electivist than the CEP of 1970–71 had recommended. In its appraisal of that period, the CEP of 1975 presented little theory of electivism, but strong assurances that it was succeeding in practice. It reported that students were overwhelmingly committed to the freedom to decide what to study (as teachers were to the freedom to decide what to teach): "students are for the most part serious and industrious, and frequently produce impressive scholarly and creative work . . . " (p. 3).

Anyone living through the last ten or twenty years at the College knows how much greater the range of student choice has become since the heyday of the "New Curriculum." A survey of curricular reports suggests only certain structural effects of the

change. In other innovations—alternatives offered within courses, the new variety of housing, willingness of college authorities to bend rules, the presence of students on college committees and at faculty meetings, the pass-fail option—one can also recognize the ideal of "students' freedom to choose" as a major shaping force in the recent history of the College.

Interdisciplinary Courses

A staple of nineteenth century curricula, the moral philosophy course for seniors, usually taught by a college's president, foreshadowed later examples of interdisciplinary teaching. Often described by contemporaries as the crowning undergraduate experience, the course at Amherst as elsewhere was a blend of ethics, theology, history, economics, politics, and good advice. But in the late nineteenth century, it disintegrated into separate specialties and was in time remembered with a blend of scorn and nostalgia as a symbol of outdated academic amateurism and paternalism.

That specialization had also had disadvantages was suggested by the Curriculum Committee when in 1937 it reported itself as "looking with favor upon proposals which attempt to break down the usual departmental barriers and to establish new and larger relationships of knowledge." In particular, the committee recommended "the introduction, in the senior year, of an occasional course in which two or more members of the Faculty, preferably in different departments, will cooperate" (Committee of Six Minutes, November 1, 1937). Perhaps the committee hoped that others might imitate the already existing "conference course" for honors candidates taught jointly by a historian, political scientist, and economist; but the practice did not immediately spread. In the descriptions of some of the new freshman courses of 1939, there are hints that disciplinary boundaries might properly be crossed even in courses for beginning college students. For example, Professor Sherman's new course in Classical Civilization was to be "a study of the cultures of Greece and Rome and their contributions to Western Civilization in economics, politics, law,

science, literature, and philosophy" (Faculty Minutes, January 23, 1939).

Of the new required introductory courses proposed in 1945, almost all included the perspectives of more than one discipline, and one of the earliest CEP's (1948–49) identified "the integration of previously separate subjects in one course" as one of the two "Big Ideas of the new curriculum" (quoted in 1954 report, p. 204). But there was surprisingly little rationale for this approach in the 1945 report. References to disciplinary inclusiveness at times seemed little more than a way of reassuring all departments that they would be represented in the required introductory core. Crossing disciplinary lines did not appear in the list of assumptions said to underlie the recommended lower-college curriculum, except in a tangential comment that "history and the humanities can perhaps be brought more closely together" (p. 71). For the upper college, the stress on the major and honors work pointed to departmental separateness, though the committee did commend the College's interdepartmental majors and suggested that more such programs be instituted, particularly in area studies (p. 78).

Although sympathetic with the interdisciplinary ideal, the review committees of 1954 and 1959 found that in practice a good deal of dissatisfaction with the new core courses sprang from their conjoining of disciplines. The sophomore Humanities course in music, fine arts, and dramatic arts was dissolved in 1955. The sophomore course "Evolution of the Earth and Man" was reduced to one semester and changed to "Organic Evolution" in 1958 and thenceforth taught by biologists alone, rather than biologists, geologists, and astronomers. The mathematicians expressed discontent with their role in Science 1–2. The assumption underlying the sophomore American Studies course ("the attempt at an integration of the various social sciences should not be sought by separating the work in the various fields . . . but by applying all of these approaches insofar as they [are] applicable to the solution of each problem . . . " [1954 report, pp. 222–223]) evoked criticisms that the course shirked its responsibilities to the disciplines.

In spite of these vicissitudes, the committee of 1964 left no

question about the interdisciplinary nature of its proposed Problems of Inquiry courses. They were projected as a way of traversing the subject distinctions which the curriculum necessarily created (p. 22). The 1964 report, in fact, drew a nice parallel between the proposed experience of the student and the experience of the mature scholar: "each of us from time to time has had to move out of what is publicly defined as his 'field' in order to put fully and squarely to himself a question the first fragmentary shape of which he found in that field" (p. 21). Further, the committee's case went, interdisciplinary study was not something to be ended for specializing upperclassmen. The committee recommended the instituting of "colloquia," elective for juniors, in which two faculty members representing different disciplines would address themselves to problems requiring the use of both disciplines. So important were the proposed colloquia that time off from other teaching duties should be granted to those engaged in planning them (p. 25).

Although a follow-up memorandum assured doubters of the committee's respect for professionalism and disciplinary identity, it also insisted that among the merits of the proposed program was "a more open, less codified set of opportunities for exploring relations among individual disciplines" ("Supplement to A Report on the Curriculum," p. 10). In the "feasibility committees" established by the faculty to consider the proposed Problems of Inquiry courses, twenty-six faculty members in four groups explored the possibilities of interdisciplinary courses. This undertaking may have done as much as the CEP's 1964 report to deepen the faculty's awareness of the potentialities of interdisciplinary teaching.

Concluding that the colloquia had proved more workable than the specifically required PI's with their large staffs, the 1970–71 CEP recommended, in conjunction with freshman proseminars, the establishment of Inquiry courses in the freshman year, courses which, in spite of the suggested name, were closer in concept to colloquia than to PI's. The proposed Inquiry courses would "introduce the current concerns and subject matter of the various areas of learning in an interesting way, without pretending to comprehensiveness or methodological finality." The

teachers would be "self-selected groups of colleagues from different departments," groups of two to five (pp. 9–10). Colloquia were to continue in addition, serving sometimes as the focus for proposed new interdepartmental majors, which any three faculty members, representing at least two departments, would be allowed to offer (p. 13).

The 1971–72 CEP, whose proposals came before the faculty in December, 1971, sought, in addition to a required freshman seminar program, to establish required junior colloquia, taught by at least two faculty members from at least two departments, "focusing appropriate disciplinary perspectives on the major social issues of our time." Neither requirement of freshman Inquiry courses nor requirement of junior colloquia ever came before the faculty for a vote. But these proposals facilitated the abolition of the PI's in 1971, since the faculty concurrently could vote to launch other, voluntary, interdisciplinary enterprises (colloquia and "courses to be called Inquiry") during the exploratory "interim."

The 1975 CEP granted no greater emphasis to interdisciplinary courses than to any others, and discounted the promise once seen in the colloquia. Their number had steadily declined, the committee noted, and some were highly specialized and attracted few students. Nor were the colloquia to be seen as uniquely interdisciplinary. Considerable interdisciplinary work, it was said, went on in departmental courses, and freshman seminars could provide "opportunities for discovering the interrelatedness of learning" (pp. 5–6).

Collaborative Teaching

The concern for interdisciplinary teaching at Amherst, though it often implied collaborative teaching, was not the same. A one-teacher course could be interdisciplinary, and several teachers could collaborate in a single-discipline course. Yet in practice the two concepts have developed together. Proposals for courses in which faculty members teach together have been variously motivated: by regret that shared faculty discourse tends to decline as the sum of knowledge increases, by hope that contrast-

ing teaching styles will complement each other, and by regret over loss of intimacy in what had once been considered a small group.

Two forerunners of later interdisciplinary-collaborative courses were introduced under Fresident Meiklejohn. "Social and Economic Institutions" was an elective, for freshmen only, taught by economists and political scientists. "The Control of Social Development," elective for seniors only, was offered in 1919–20 by four professors representing economics, history, and political science. Other courses occasionally appeared in the catalog with more than one faculty member listed, but sometimes these were taught in completely separate sections. The new freshman courses of 1939 were designed and taught by individual faculty members.

Although living witnesses recall the collaborative planning and teaching under the 1947 curriculum, the 1945 report itself said little about the matter. The report showed much interest in making sure that students constitute an intellectual community, but seemed to take it for granted that the faculty already did so. Though the matter was not addressed in a general way, the committee's support for collaborative teaching is readily discernible in its description of the proposed introductory science sequence (p. 51). The 1954 report, like its predecessor, reveals most about collaborative teaching when speaking of specific courses. Although Humanities 1–2 was taught entirely in sections, the weekly staff meetings brought "enjoyable and fruitful discussion" partly because of the differing professional backgrounds of the staff. Teachers took turns in planning assignments and worked out examinations together (pp. 230–231). But the review included a note of caution. The Humanities course

> forces everyone to go outside the limits of his particular professional interest, of his "subject," and while this is probably a good thing it is not always easy. To do it successfully involves a willingness to submerge at least some of one's personal enthusiasms or prejudices in the common enterprise of a fairly large group, and this necessitates a real belief in the value of the common enterprise. If such can be assumed, then the inevitable compromises can be cheerfully accepted. If an individual cannot achieve this,

> he will be unhappy in the course, and an unhappy teacher makes for bad results (p. 231).

Although it recommended continuation of prescribed courses in broad fields, the 1959 committee warned that such a program could result in "sections being taught by those who have neither the interest nor the competence to do an effective job" (p. 15). In fact, its proposal for sophomore seminars during a five-week second term was in part designed to let more faculty "teach the thing which interests them most" (p. 40).

It was partly in reaction to the coercive side of staffing that the 1966 curriculum sharply reduced the number of required collaborative interdisciplinary courses. But the notion of collaboration was furthered on a small scale in the new colloquia. In fact, it was arguable that colloquia, with two or three teachers present in the same classroom, were more genuinely collaborative than large, sectioned courses. Compared with the PI's, which they were designed to replace, the freshman Inquiry courses recommended in 1971 shared with colloquia the advantage of giving wider range to faculty teaching interests. Freshman seminars were imagined in the Birnbaum committee's original proposal as taught by individual faculty members who would meet together for a week in the summer and in frequent staff meetings while the seminars were underway (p. 8). (In practice, freshman seminar leaders saw little of each other.)

Although highly sensitive to the dangers of conscripted participation in collaborative courses, the CEP of 1975 still found itself troubled by fragmentation of the faculty. In language not often heard in an institution which took satisfaction in being a small college, the committee observed that "Amherst faculty members are not as well acquainted with each other personally or professionally as we should be for the optimum realization of the College's educational potential" (p. 6). The committee called for more departmental staff courses, "in which older and younger faculty cooperate in presenting their subject" (pp. 6–7). Clearly, collaborative teaching can be encouraged quite apart from interdisciplinary teaching, and two teachers in the same "subject" are quite likely to possess differing skills, insights, and knowledge.

The Laboratory or Seminar Method of Teaching

"Academic courtesy" and, more important, academic freedom dictate non-interference with teaching of courses, once approved by the faculty. But when certain courses are to be required of all students, then the general nature of such courses is a matter of college-wide concern, or so the 1945 report argued. Of the report's two "Big Ideas" (as discerned from the vantage point of 1949), one was "the laboratory method" (1954 report, p. 204). Perhaps on no other matter was the FCLRP report so explicit about what it sought to reform and how it sought to reform it:

> Except in most of his instruction in the sciences, and to a more limited degree in the fine arts, the student does not get, save in occasional seminars during his last two years, any direct stimulus to deal actively with ideas. He is given book learning which is largely secondhand, learning which to be assimilated must of necessity be supplemented by actual laboratory practice. In the mathematical and natural sciences laboratory practice is recognized and established. Students are not expected to study those subjects without learning to solve actual problems. But the application of similar practice in the social sciences or in literary subjects tends to be ignored . . . . There should be less of the routine of lectures, recitations, and assigned readings, and there should be constant parallel exercise in the discussion of the materials, with the assignment of individual problems to be worked out and presented by the student. This would involve cutting down the number of conventional courses and the substitution for them of a comparatively small number of fundamental courses pursuing their subject in the spirit of research rather than in the spirit of passive inert acquisition. The majority of students, we believe, would take more interest in their own education if they were given more to do about it. In any case, whatever they actually learn is only that which they have actively acquired for themselves (p. 29).

Finding that the term "laboratory course" struck some as implying the subjection of students to some fad of "progressive education," and that the term "seminar" offended those who saw in it the narrowness of advanced undergraduate or graduate school training, the committee settled on the unwieldy name "courses of the 'laboratory' or 'seminar' type" (1954 report, p. 183). But whatever its troubles with nomenclature, the committee called

for learning that was activist and participatory, citing Alfred North Whitehead's animadversions on "the aimless accumulation of precise knowledge, inert and unutilized" (p. 43).

The committee's ideal had the advantage of being applicable throughout the College. Instead of concluding, as many curricular investigations do, that "the natural sciences are different," it took much of its imagery for all general education from the science student's laboratory experience. Much of what was implied was a familiar view of the good teacher as one who makes the student a self-teacher, but the flavor was fresh.

In its survey of how well the "laboratory-seminar" concept had been fulfilled in the new required courses, the 1954 review committee emphasized that the method was possible only when material traditionally viewed as part of departmental introductory courses was left out. Coverage should be sacrificed for intensity. The report showed little sympathy for the emerging view that the structure of a discipline required a prescribable step-by-step introduction. Rather, the emphasis was placed on the disciplines in use.

Still endorsing the laboratory-seminar ideal ("the doctrine of 'learning by doing' "), the Koester committee of 1958–59 regretted that this ideal was sometimes used to imply "that there is something disreputable about demanding mastery of certain bodies of knowledge." There should be less tolerance "for those students who at times seem to be rationalizing their laziness by regurgitating the 'regurgitation' argument" (pp. 9–10). The committee did more than echo perennial complaints about too-large sections. "It is crucial," the 1959 report argued, "that a student learn to ask himself the right questions; but he cannot very well be taught to do so unless the teacher, operating at close quarters, shows him how. This is of special importance in the early stages of his development as a student" (p. 33). Attentive to economic feasibility, the committee suggested "a proper balance between the large- and small-enrollment courses" (p. 55). But there was little point in favoring the latter if, as the committee had heard was the case, some teachers were violating the small-enrollment spirit by using the lecture method (p. 55).

The Epstein committee of 1964 appended to its report descrip-

tions of exemplary PI courses. These made clear what was implicit in the text of the report that the new courses were to be taught mostly in small sections, continuing the laboratory-seminar pattern.

The recommendations of the 1970–71 CEP for a freshman program indicated that the small-enrollment course was deeply identified with Amherst education; no proseminar was to include more than fifteen students (a limit generally adhered to in the program of elective freshman seminars offered since 1972). The Inquiry courses, also generally in sections of not over fifteen students, were, in the "seminar spirit, to avoid comprehensiveness and methodological finality" (p. 9).

The cumbersome name "laboratory or seminar method" had died out, but the ideal survives, especially when courses are conceived as introductory or required. Yet it remains problematical how firm the hold of this style of teaching is at the College. The CEP of 1975 made its case for free election by showing students' range of courses through three curricular divisions. Whether most students had participated in small courses designed to encourage them actively to acquire learning for themselves, was not explored.

Changes

Judged by actual institution within the curriculum, the landmarks among Amherst's curricular reports are those of 1945 and 1964. By most criteria, the "New Curriculum" launched in 1947 was a success. Its survival for two decades, however, probably owes a good deal to vested faculty interests in large required courses, the strong personalities of those who were permanent chairmen of the core courses, and the unattractiveness of the particular plan suggested in 1959. The authors of the report of 1964 rightly saw themselves as heirs of the Kennedy committee: "We think we have been guided by the splendid revolutionary precedents that have been in effect at Amherst for nearly twenty years—some of them for much longer than that. We certainly have not tried to cut ourselves off from the past. But we have tried to propose a fresh start" ("Supplement to A Report on the Curriculum," p. 12). The CEP of 1964 sought to preserve the

College's commitment to general education and interdisciplinary courses of the laboratory-seminar type. The early demise of the 1966 curriculum, for which the social context offers a host of causes, can also be traced to the CEP's preservation of certain aspects of the "New Curriculum" which might better have been discarded, namely, the concept of three curricular divisions, and the interpretation of a common experience of all students as meaning that specific courses should be required. The result was a feeling of coercion among teachers and students in the PI courses. The plan offered in the CEP report of February, 1971, would have directed the College away from both divisions and specifically required courses, but that plan was never formally placed before the faculty.

By adopting a thematic rather than a chronological frame for this introduction, we have hoped to shift attention away from specific committees and specific curricula and toward abiding problems in the task of translating the ideal of liberal education into a curriculum. The themes discussed will reappear in the proposals and raitonale that make up the bulk of this report. The special introductory function of a student's first year at college, the illiberality of either a narrowly specialized education or an education in which students establish no intellectual relationships among courses taken, the importance of a large measure of student choice among studies, the dangers of exaggerated distinctions between disciplines or departments, the benefits of faculty members working together in planning and teaching courses, the rejection of passive absorption as a satisfactory mode of learning—these ideas will recur in the pages that follow. They will recur, we hope, somewhat freshly put, combined in ways that open new possibilities for the College to fulfill its educational commitment.

We hope we have seen a little further. If we stop short of saying that we have stood on the shoulders of giants, it is simply because many of those whose work has been described are still active among us, too delightfully human for apotheosis. But we insist on acknowledging our awareness that we have worked within a great tradition. If there is to be a "Curriculum of 1978," it will be a curriculum of renewal.

THE FRESHMAN YEAR

IN THIS SECTION we present a proposal for a program of special courses for freshmen. It is not the whole of our proposal, but we consider it a very important part, for it draws directly on our more general ideas of what a curriculum should be and has important implications for the later years of study. Indeed, we believe its main appeal to depend upon a larger concept of what students should be doing in a college, and what might best prepare them to do it. In one sense it is a "minimalist" proposal: its aims are far from grandiose, it asks for relatively little in the way of required courses, and it does not ask for a radical revision of the structure of the institution or the content of our teaching. In quite another sense, however, it is a "maximalist" proposal. If its few requirements will rest lightly on students, their weight will be felt fully by the faculty. And if it does not ask for a reorganization of our institutional or intellectual life, it does ask the faculty to subject their intellectual commitments to continuous, severe, and (possibly) unaccustomed scrutiny.

Above all, it is an unpretentious plan. This is chiefly so because it is offered in the recognition that institutional rearrangements, such as the introduction of new courses, can change little by themselves. At most such changes can provide an opportunity for people to do something they see as new and worth their while. To the degree that the faculty comes to feel freshness and value in what they do, and to the degree that this feeling is communicated to students, the plan could be accounted a success. But in any case, it will not be an easily measurable success. The greatest virtue, and to some the chief deficiency, of the concept of education advocated here, is precisely that it contains within itself no clear standards for verifying or measuring its effects. Its successes must lie in its "doing" and not in its "results."

A Curriculum for Entering Students

Much of the difficulty in curricular planning arises from problems with the word "education," and especially from the temptation to make its denotation overly and deceptively concrete. The result is familiar: an attempt to pin the idea of education to some image of the "educated person," which then can be seen as the "product" of our teaching. With this the issue seems to sharpen: do we produce what we should produce; if not, why not? But the clarity is only apparent, for behind the seemingly obvious question is a series of less obvious questions that must be settled first. And then the familiar argument begins: What things should the educated person know? What should he or she be prepared to do in the future? What intellectual "methods" should such a person command? And even, what should his or her character be? The argument acquires additional momentum from the essentially fortuitous (though sociologically very significant) fact that institutions like Amherst College are places of certification as well as education. The College confers degrees. These signify, or are believed to signify, something. But what is this something? What, as the wearisome question puts it, does the degree mean?

At the present time there is great pressure to respond to these questions quickly and unreflectively. College and university faculties feel vulnerable and set upon. The professoriat stands in some public disrepute. Memories of student disorders mingle with economic anxieties producing an image of the academy as purposeless, staffed by drones, and unable to live by a meaningful idea of itself, let alone formulate one.

We reject this image on many grounds, but principally because of one of the premises on which it rests, namely, that it is possible to entertain an idea of the "product" of the academy that is both honest and concrete. The problems of our institutional definition, we believe, cannot be stated in the form of a question, or series of questions, about what an educated person "should know." It is not that such questions are unanswerable. Rather, the difficulty lies in the opposite direction, that they are alto-

gether too answerable. But the attempt to answer them is itself an integral part of the process of education. There are many justifiable concepts of what an educated person is: in the ideal academy each student must attempt to formulate his or her own answers. To believe otherwise is to violate the one thing we know most certainly about the intellectual life: that at its heart is the asking of questions. As for the meaning of the degree, in fact the degree will always mean many things. We will always disagree among ourselves about what four years spent at Amherst signifies. And the world outside the College will continue to impute its own meanings to the certificate we confer, whatever we may say. The debate about these matters will continue, and must always do so as long as the institution retains any vitality at all.

For these reasons we do not believe that Amherst College can base its "identity" in some particular response or another to questions of this order. If Amherst has a distinctive role to play in undergraduate education, it cannot arise from some imaginary (for at most it would be this) consensus about what "all graduates must know," or what the future requirements of good citizenship will be, or what the world needs from its educated minority. Among educators and the educated themselves complete agreement on these matters is not possible, nor should it be. Rather, the distinctiveness of Amherst College must lie, as it always has, in the way these questions are asked, and in the manner in which they are debated. Therefore, we do not seek the key to what Amherst's curriculum should be in the wilderness of possible substantive ends. To choose some image of our "product" would be, at best, to foreclose the very kind of debate we would wish our curriculum to foster. At worst, it might foreclose the future of the College altogether, for who can say with certainty what particular skills or qualities of expertise the future will demand?

Is it possible, then, to form any conception at all of the role of an institution like Amherst College? We believe that it is, but only if a very different starting point is taken. We suggest that great clarification results if we abandon the idea of education as "production," and shift instead to a concept of education as "process" or "activity." Education, thus conceived, becomes some-

thing that "goes on" rather than "results in." The advantages of this shift, we believe, are several, but chief among them is surely that this concept of education is genuinely hospitable to the idea, traditionally stressed at Amherst, that there is a mutuality in the relationship between teacher and student. To educate is not to fill an empty bucket. To teach is not to manipulate passive minds. Rather, education is an activity, perhaps the most characteristically human of all activities, to which students and faculty have given over an important part of their lives. Though this activity can be justified on instrumental grounds—and frequently it is so justified—in the end it is valuable on its own account. It defines our purpose here, both as students and as teachers.

But what is this activity? As we know well, to attempt its definition is to invite cliché. Still, we do have a fairly clear idea of it. It is the effort to seek order where order cannot readily be seen, to establish connections between things not obviously connected. It is the attempt to discriminate within, and to create ordered representations of, the world of nature and the world of man. Its roots lie in insistent curiosity; its outcome takes the form of clarity where there was obscurity before. This activity is not peculiar to the academy. In it we recognize a faculty that is definitive of what it is to be a fully living human being. This activity, we must therefore say, is the highest part of human nature, and is at home in many callings other than the scholarly ones. Its symptoms are always and everywhere the same: a critical engagement with life, a willingness to examine the given and to question dogma, an ability to entertain novel ways of thinking.

What, then, is distinctive about the academic life? It cannot be education itself, for education, as we have understood it, can be found outside the academy. Rather, what distinguishes the academy is the fact that here is an institution of which education is the *raison d'être*. It is well known that education, even in the sense here used, can serve the material interests of man, which is a major reason that the world puts such great stock in it. But the academy, properly speaking, is a place where the instrumental value of education is pushed into the background. It is a zone

of freedom where education may flourish for its own sake, where difficult or unconventional questions may be asked.

But freedom is not a vacuum, and for such education to occur, there must be a certain context. Like all human activities, education depends upon a state of mind, an attitude, without which its coherence and momentum would soon be lost. It is this state of mind that the curriculum must be designed to nurture, for without it, education, as we have defined it, must cease both within and without the academy. Referring to the methods of science, Karl Popper once wrote, "I know of no better synonym for 'rational' than 'critical.'" This dictum, it seems to us, expresses well the intellectual predisposition upon which true education is grounded. It is critical-mindedness, expressed as a general disposition. It is the capacity to doubt, not cynically, but in a way that preserves openness of mind. It is an appetite for the new and the different, and a willingness to believe that the last word is never said, that new and more interesting possibilities always exist.

Viewing education in this light gives us a new foothold on certain perennial curricular problems. One is the vexing question of "requirements." If we are right in what we have said, then it seems to us that there are two general implications bearing on the question of requiring courses of students. The first is that required courses should be relatively few. The natural habitat of critical thought is the situation of choice. Critical reasoning is something that is exercised or practiced, not something that merely resides in the mind. Nor is it carried by bodies of knowledge or scholarly disciplines as such, though it can be expressed through them. In truth, the critical faculty is most directly exercised in the reasoning that accompanies choosing: the choice of a course of action, a moral position, a problem for investigation, a method of approach. A curriculum committed to this idea cannot be one which overly emphasizes decisions made for rather than by students. Yet saying this is not to warrant the belief that liberal education is in some way the sum of individual choices, nor is it an endorsement of the idea that faculty should have nothing to say about how students should distribute their time and energy. Rather, it is simply to underline our conviction

that central to each student's college experience should be the self-instigation of his or her own education. For this to occur, the student must be given a certain space, even if decisions sometimes result that contradict what members of the faculty conceive to be their own more mature judgment. The faculty does have the obligation to create a setting in which the decisions made by students can be reasoned ones, a point to which we shall return. But at the same time the curriculum should be neither strongly prescriptive nor proscriptive about what these decisions will be.

But there is a second implication, which at first sight may seem inconsistent with the first. This is the evident fact that a certain amount of regulation is necessary to foster the very freedom of choice we wish to encourage. We assert this because we believe that reasoned decisions about how to take advantage of the opportunities present at Amherst can occur only when two conditions are present. The first is rather crudely informational; the second is more diffusely attitudinal.

Sound choice requires information. Students need to have a clear idea of what actually takes place in the academy. They must know what the nature of the institution is, what people do here, and, in a general way, how they do it. For this the catalog will not suffice, nor will freshman-orientation programs, no matter how sensible and well-meaning. It is sometimes forgotten that students enter the College from a milieu very different from Amherst's. Secondary schools are not colleges, and we may surmise that secondary school course work for the most part has a very different purpose and character from work at Amherst. Thus, most entering students will know little if anything about the essential nature of the institution. Worse, some will enter with minds filled with popular caricatures of academic life.

At present we leave the enculturation of our students largely to chance. They learn in fragments: from experiences in their initial courses, from fellow students, and from episodic encounters with faculty and administrators. Only the freshman seminars are designed to introduce students to the life of the College in a coherent and considered way. But four years is a short time, too short to entrust such an important matter to isolated courses and the vagaries of the dormitory grapevine. We suggest, therefore,

that the College should ensure that freshmen receive some sort of considered introduction to the intellectual life of the institution, an introduction that would emphasize not particular subjects, but the character of learning at a more general level. And given the character of learning as it is understood in a college like Amherst, considerable stress should be given to the question of the disciplines and their relationships with each other. How is academic life organized? What are the major subtraditions? How have they arisen? What is their location with respect to each other? These are some of the questions which our students should encounter at the very outset of their college careers.

The second of our two conditions for reasoned choice is more difficult to characterize. It has essentially to do with what we have called a critical sensibility, especially in its dimension of openness. But here we must be careful. Many students come to Amherst with fairly clear ideas of what they wish to do while here, and these are often related to career plans. There is nothing necessarily dishonorable in this: these are wishes we cannot thwart, nor ought we to try. But as educators we have a positive obligation to ensure that these preconceived desires are tempered by a genuine openness to the possibility of new intellectual interests and commitments. We must keep the zone of freedom necessary for us all, teachers as well as students, from collapsing. The experience brought by most students to the College is not likely to sanction the state of mind we need. Secondary school science is not a good guide to what science might be like here. Some fields, such as philosophy or anthropology, are not represented in secondary school curricula at all. And of course the ephemeral enthusiasms of the popular culture leave their own residue of prejudices in entering students. Career anxieties compound these difficulties, further distorting students' conceptions of what their educations should be.

We cannot assume, then, that openness, even in the minimal sense of an unprejudiced approach to the selection of courses, is a characteristic of our first-year students. For this reason we are convinced that beginning students should be exposed to experiences that give them some idea of the *range* of learning that takes place at the College. That students will ultimately concen-

trate in a particular field of study is inevitable, and, we think, desirable. That the decisions involved will often involve professional aspiration is also inevitable. But the choice of where to concentrate and how to organize a four-year course of study should be both informed and open. The student should know that all choice involves exclusion. He or she should choose in the awareness of what the alternatives will truly be. Choices, in other words, will be made: it is our job to make sure that they are made with a full sense of their implications and consequences.

If all that we have said is so, then there are basically two purposes to be served by a curriculum for entering students. One is "introductory." Students should be given an idea of the essential nature of the academic life they are entering. The other is "distributive." Students should be given exposure to some variety of subjects and intellectual styles. Once again we stress that our justification does not rest on a doctrine of what graduates of Amherst College "must know," but on a concept of intellectual life which stresses openness and flexibility as the essential conditions of critical reasoning. At its center is the notion that true education must be self-education, and that the proper function of a curriculum is not to implant some defined body of knowledge, but to create the conditions under which reason is liberated from ignorance and prejudice.

Let us now turn to a more detailed discussion of the concept of introduction and distribution and see how these objectives might be achieved.

On Introduction

Freshman seminars notwithstanding, in the present curriculum the burden of "introduction" is largely carried by the introductory courses offered by the various departments. Many if not most of these courses are taught with an eye to the role of their particular subject matter in the liberal arts. Nonetheless, for the most part these courses are introductions to the disciplines or fields of study as such. This is an essential task, and is performed well by the present '11' courses; indeed, some of the best courses

in the College belong to this group. We trust that the introductory courses will continue to be attentive to their place in the liberal arts. Even so, it is our belief that no '11' course, or combination of such courses, can truly be said to be a *general* introduction to liberal studies.

In part the problem is one of the boundaries of our subjects and disciplines, and is a good deal more complex than is commonly believed. We do not suggest that the categories of "disciplines" are in some way "wrong," nor that the disciplines do what they claim to do, poorly. The difficulty, rather, lies in the success of the separate disciplines in coming to terms with problems they have defined for themselves. Each discipline creates its own world of what is important and what is not, of problems to be solved, and of methods for their solution. By their very nature, therefore, the disciplines tend to some degree to be inward-looking. This is their virtue, and underlies their achievements, but at the same time it lends the impression that these distinctions represent natural fissures in what is known, or can be known, about the world. There seems little doubt that the distinctions upon which the disciplines are based do not reflect fundamental features of the reality we seek to know. Historical accident, the caprices of academic politics, marriages of conveniences—factors such as these, as well as more purely intellectual considerations, have contributed to the growth of the disciplines as we now know them. The very success of the disciplines has become a sanction for the compartmentalization on which it depends. And we suspect this compartmentalization to be, in some ways, quite misleading.

But the matter does not end here. The disciplines and fields of study do exist, and their existence has much to do with what is, in fact, professed by the men and women who make up the faculty of the College. And even if we grant all that has been said about the artificiality of the disciplines, there remains a substantial residuum of genuine value. At their best the disciplines represent internally coherent traditions of inquiry. In part these traditions are carried in bodies of literature. In part, too, they take the less tangible form of points of view: conceptions of what there is to know and how we can know it. So real is this that

the disciplines can inspire commitments, often vocational in the best sense of this word, to the intellectual possibilities they open up. If the outer boundaries of the disciplines are somewhat hazy, the centers are solid enough, and have provided Archimedean ground for much of the success and creativity of the heritage of scholarship represented by Amherst College.

What implications does this have for planning a curriculum, both in general and for the first year? To start with, it suggests that our diffidence about the disciplines should not be allowed to blind us to the essential role disciplines traditionally have played in the organization of learning, and perforce, in the definition of the competencies of our faculty. This is, perhaps, an obvious point, but it is an important one, too. Among other things, it seems to mean that it would be misguided to attempt to disestablish the disciplines in our curriculum: to do so would be to abandon an important source of coherence in our intellectual culture. And if this is true, then it also means that an introduction to the intellectual life of the College must take the disciplines seriously; otherwise it would not be a true introduction at all.

But at the same time there is a further implication. Given what we know of the insularity of the disciplines, it seems clear that an introduction to the intellectual life of the College must be established on some point of view exterior to the disciplines themselves. At a minimum this means that introductory courses should be interdisciplinary and distinguished from the '11' courses which introduce the disciplines and fields of study as such. But it means more than this, too, because a merely additive approach to the disciplines will do little more than foster a sense of pluralism and relativism. There is no harm in this, and possibly much good, but the essential point is surely not that there is a plurality of possible points of view, but that for knowledge to be possible at all, some point of view is necessary, and that any such vantage point must be selective and must rest on choices and goals which are not immutable or absolute. At last, then, we can form a general idea of what introductory courses should do: they should use the disciplines, but in a way that takes the disciplines beyond themselves, or puts them in a setting in which their boundaries and limitations are tested. Thus, the introduc-

tory courses should incorporate the disciplines but should operate in a mode that we wish to call "critical"—critical in the sense that much more than the usual attention should be given to the ultimate aims of scholarship. And this must include careful consideration of the values, both explicit and hidden, that support and animate the intellectual life. But can such things be done within the framework of an introductory curriculum? Can a critical perspective coexist with coherence? We believe that it can, and in part, our proposals incorporate this conviction.

On Distribution

We have suggested that "distribution" is a legitimate goal for a curriculum for students entering the College. We have justified this by reference to the quality of openness which we take to be the sine qua non of education. There is, however, a deceptive ease in any such assertion, for the question of how to define distribution, and how to ensure it in a student's program, is an extremely difficult one.

The "distribution requirement" is one time-honored device for bringing distribution about. In its usual form it assumes that there are certain broad areas of learning, defined in terms of some scheme of curricular "groups" or "divisions," to which the student should have some exposure before a certain number of years of study have elapsed. Students are required to take a specified number of courses from each category, often in specially defined sequences. The goal, as we have said, is quite defensible. The means for achieving it, however, are more dubious, in our opinion principally because of the reliance on a scheme of divisions.

The traditional divisions of the curriculum are essentially a taxonomic device for the classifying of disciplines and/or departments. The loose ends resulting from such schemes are notorious. Is psychology to be classed with the sciences or not? Is physical anthropology a branch of biology, or does it have closer affinities with cultural anthropology? And where does philosophy belong? Difficult as they are, we believe these problems to be simply the surface manifestations of a much deeper confu-

sion. This is the assumption that there are, in fact, coherent intellectual traditions which the divisions distinguish.

We have tried to show that the individual disciplines do indeed exist, and that disciplinary distinctions must be honored in our curriculum, even as they are subjected to critical scrutiny. We suggest that the same is not true of the traditional divisions, with the possible exception of the sciences. There may be, as many have argued, something truly distinctive about the scientific method which sets the sciences off, as a group, from other fields of study. But whatever the merits of this argument, we do not think it is possible to make a similar claim for the other two divisions. The social sciences are many things—many methods, and many points of view. Some see the social sciences as genuinely scientific: others see them as "interpretive," and here the social sciences blend imperceptibly into the humanities. Moreover, one would be hard-pressed to find a unifying principle for the humanities upon which those conventionally grouped together there would agree, or that would not include at least something of what is done under the rubric of social science. To suggest, then, that a student acquires familiarity with the method or substance of social science by taking, say, a course or two in anthropology, or to claim that the humanities may be introduced via course work in English, is to yield to what is at most a half-truth. Such a student would surely learn something about anthropology or English literature, and this is all to the good. That the student has distributed in a limited sense is also clear; he has taken courses in two subjects while he might have taken them in only one. But to suggest that the student is thereby put in touch with principles that somehow unify broad areas of knowledge seems little more than pretense to us.

The divisions are basically a bureaucratic convention. Their function is to classify departments for the purpose of ensuring distribution in undergraduate education. But once fixed in a curriculum as our historical introduction suggests, these abstract categories seem to acquire a life of their own. With the passage of time the divisions become less the means of distributing course elections, and more its rationale. In the end the idea is insidiously created that the divisions actually divide knowledge

in some rational or natural way, that in some fashion they represent fundamental compartments of knowledge. It is at this point that we begin to hear the argument that it is "inconceivable" that anyone should graduate from a good liberal arts college without exposure to the "humanities" or the "social sciences." For the aforementioned reasons, we find such strictures unconvincing. We therefore suggest that the scheme of divisions has outlived its usefulness, and we propose that it be dropped as an organizational form at Amherst College. And more to the immediate point, we submit that distribution requirements are not the best way to serve the principle of distribution. At most they are a way of creating the appearance of distribution in students' programs while we continue to do the things we normally do.

There is, of course, another way to seek to ensure distribution, a method considerably more draconian than the distribution requirement. This is the so-called core curriculum: an array of specific courses, in particular areas of study, which all students are required to take. As those who experienced the 1947 curriculum often recall with approval, the core curriculum has at least one singular advantage: it exposes all students and many faculty to the same books and the same experiences, and thereby supplies a basis for common discourse within the institution. This is a very considerable virtue, but even so we are not advocating a core curriculum. The justification for core courses seems to us also to require a grounding in the actual content of the courses. And this justification must be a very strong one, for these are specific courses we require of all. We must be virtually certain, in other words, about the things that all graduates "must know" before we impose such a requirement on our students (and on the faculty who would have to teach it). As we have tried to show, this approach takes us in the wrong direction, for it is based on a mistaken idea of the nature of education.

A Critical Introduction to Liberal Studies

To summarize what has been said thus far, the committee finds the goals of introduction and distribution to be valuable ones, but is not persuaded of the effectiveness of the traditional curric-

ular devices used to achieve them. We do not believe that simply requiring or encouraging some array of departmental introductory courses truly introduces the intellectual life of the academy in a comprehensive way, though we do believe such courses to have an essential role in our curriculum. Nor are we convinced that distribution requirements or core curricula distribute in a way satisfactory enough to justify their imposition as requirements.

The question, then, is whether there is a way to organize a freshman curriculum that will achieve the objectives of introduction and at least a reasonable degree of distribution while avoiding, or at least minimizing, the difficulties described on the preceding pages. We believe that the following plan accomplishes this. Moreover, we see the plan as both workable and pedagogically interesting. It offers, we think, immense possibilities for exciting teaching and learning. We are also convinced that it will encourage the finest sort of collegiality among the faculty. And perhaps as important as the foregoing, it will reintroduce some degree of common experience in an Amherst education.

The Freshman Program in Outline

1) Each freshman will be required to take three courses expressly designed as "critical introductions to liberal studies." These courses will not be offered by departments, nor will they be included in course sequences leading to particular departmental majors. The courses will be offered only to freshmen, and each freshman will have to take all three during the first year of study. Each freshman will be required to choose one course from each of three categories, and within each category there will be at least two courses offered per semester. Freshmen will take at least one course during the first semester, and normally no more than two in either semester.

2) Each course will be designed to be an introduction to liberal studies from a critical point of view. It is not easy to reduce this to a set formula, and we shall have more to say about it below. For the present we note that in part it means the courses will be interdisciplinary, but it does not mean only this. Funda-

mentally, it implies that whatever its ostensible "subject matter," each course will be concerned with problems related to general characteristics of the intellectual life. This will include conscious attention to values.

3) The courses will fall into three categories. These categories name some of the most prominent and enduring concerns of our common intellectual life. Each is broadly conceived to allow a great variety of courses to represent it. We assume no natural or inherent correlation between these categories and specific departments, disciplines, or individuals within the College: rather, we have selected them as subjects or areas of intellectual activity basic enough to have exercised a continuing pull on the imaginations and intellects of scholars with very different training and disciplinary affiliations. Since they do not classify disciplines, departments and programs, but simply reflect enduring intellectual concerns, these categories are not to be taken as "divisions" of the College.

The categories are not three "must knows" for all students, but they are both general and distinct enough to provide a legitimate means of entrance into the life of the College. Contact with all three should ensure a significant degree of distribution: at the very least, students will have confronted what is bound to be a very wide range of intellectual interests and styles.

4) The general description of the categories will be as follows:

a) *Introduction to Liberal Studies 1:*
Sign, Form, and Meaning

Meaning—how we discover it or, in turn, express it—is one of the oldest of all intellectual preoccupations. yet the domain of meaning, and the questions associated with it, remain extraordinarily rich and complex. The places where we look for meaning, for example, range from speech and writing, to numbers, maps, and music, to rituals, gestures, and all manner of visual display. We may even think about the meaning of medical symptoms or wonder what animals are communicating with their cries. Then too, along with different sources, we are aware of different styles of meaning: public and personal, imaginative and argumenta-

tive, useful and beautiful, latent and explicit. Nor do we always apprehend meaning in the same way; at times we are intuitive, at other times, methodical and analytic.

The courses in this group are designed to give students a critical introduction to the study of meaning. Potential foci for these courses are various, but all will suggest some of the more important questions that arise when one considers the forms and actions that convey meaning, what exactly is conveyed, how it is conveyed, and how certain we can be about such matters. These courses may also give heightened emphasis to questions of personal identity, the idea of the self as expressed in public and personal meanings. In addition to analysis and criticism, in most courses students will engage directly in using some symbolic medium. The object of the courses, however, will not be to develop particular creative or interpretive skills, nor will it be to develop expertise in any specific tradition of criticism. Rather, the courses will deal primarily with the larger questions of how meaning may be expressed and interpreted, and where these activities are located in liberal education. In so doing, the courses may touch upon such matters as the relationship between forms of expression and social and political values.

b) *Introduction to Liberal Studies 2:*
Nature: Observation and Theory

The application of scientific theory and method to the study of physical reality is one of the most characteristic intellectual activities of our age, and is central to the life of the academy. These courses are designed to introduce students to the tradition of scientific investigation through a critical examination of scientific conjecture, theory formation, and experimental test.

The courses will emphasize the creative and analytical processes through which science has defined, represented and interpreted nature. They will deal with such matters as how problems are defined as "scientific," the formulation of hypotheses, the use of quantification, and meaning of evidence. Most courses will include laboratory or field work experience. Some courses will draw material from the history and philosophy of science, while others will be centered on scientific problems as such. All

courses however, will engage questions of the nature of the scientific imagination, its achievements, limitations, impact on the human condition, and place in liberal learning.

c) *Introduction to Liberal Studies 3: Social Life and Social Change*

Human life is social life, and the collective existence of man is the source of much if not all that is specifically human. Examination of the nature of social life is an ancient and lasting intellectual concern. Courses in this group treat human life in its social aspect. The objects of study are the experience of humankind in groups, the patterns of thought, meaning and action that sustain this shared life, the relationship between the private and public life, and the way these change over time.

Material presented in these courses will vary considerably in historical and cultural milieu, but all courses will emphasize recorded and observed social life as well as the concepts that have been used to categorize or explain it. The principal goal of the courses, however, is not to learn about specific societies or society-in-general, nor is it to introduce students to any particular learned disciplines. Rather, the courses will be designed to suggest, first, that the complexities of social life as lived exceed the reach of any single intellectual approach, and second, that intellectual methods exist which allow a degree of understanding beyond uninstructed observation and "common sense." Students will gain an awareness of both strengths and shortcomings of points of view that have been applied in the study of social life, and the place of these in the liberal arts. Students will also encounter the problem of the interplay of fact and value in the study of society, and the relationship between social study and social responsibility.

5) The courses will be modeled on the various interdisciplinary endeavors that have characterized Amherst in the past, beginning with the president's course in moral philosophy, and of which the existing Colloquia are conspicuous contemporary examples. Each course will be taught by a small group of faculty, themselves the designers. We consider this to be one of the most

significant features of our plan. We find ourselves in strong sympathy with the discomfort expressed by the 1975 CEP at the increasing fragmentation of the faculty. We feel that courses of the sort we envisage will provide an excellent opportunity for the faculty to come together, in groups that are frequently dissolved and reconstituted, around matters of common interest, and in the process to get to know itself better than it has in recent years.

We assume that true community of interest is best found in small groups, and accordingly we expect that the courses will be designed and taught by groups rarely larger than four or five, and sometimes smaller. These will not be courses in which people teach from syllabi designed by others: rather, the courses will reflect the interests, enthusiasms, and abilities of each faculty member involved. But although the courses will grow out of common interests, we do not expect them to reflect consensus. It will be important that these courses bring together people who can engage in lively debate—who will not fail to offer significant challenge to each other. One of the principal values of these courses is that students will be exposed to alternative responses to common problems. We see this as complementary to our proposed "adjunct program" to be described in the next section—what students see faculty doing in the introductory courses, they will attempt themselves to do on their own later on.

We make no assumptions about the sorts of people who will teach in combination with each other. One of the novel features of this plan is its freedom from departmental or divisional anchorings. This means that the courses can form around common interests as such. Thus, it is conceivable that a physicist, a philosopher and an anthropologist might design a course together—say, one dealing with cosmologies—under the rubric "Nature: Observation and Theory." Or a course under "Social Life and Social Change" might be mounted by a sociologist, a psychologist, and a student of literature. The possibilities will not soon be exhausted.

6) The formats of the courses will differ widely. We have been instructed, however, by the many successful cases of "seminar"

class organization at Amherst, and we hope to see a strong emphasis given to teaching in small groups. At the same time, we would wish to see other forms of classroom organization utilized so that all students in a given course will be exposed to all faculty teaching it, and to their differing points of view. In any case, we believe these courses to be ones in which a low student/faculty ratio is desirable, preferably 15:1, or at the outside, 20:1. If we assume a freshman class of 375 and a student/faculty ratio of 15:1, this would mean that 75 faculty would have to teach in the freshman program each year. Assuming the same numbers, our plan would require that, on the average, each faculty member would have to participate in the program twice every three years.

We are not insensitive to the problems which staffing these courses will create for other programs within the curriculum, but we feel that adjustments can be made. The Freshman Seminars, however, will have to be given up. Our feelings about this are mixed. There have been notable successes among the Freshman Seminars and there have been less successful instances, too. Overall, the program has been a valuable one, as the Report of the Task Force on Freshman Seminars indicates (Appendix 2), and in the absence of any concrete alternatives we would favor its retention. But we are convinced that the plan we advance here will avoid the isolation and fragmentation which some believe to be one of the principal shortcomings of the freshman seminars, while incorporating many of their best features.

7) These will be courses in which there will be frequent exposure of student work to critical scrutiny. Much of this is possible in the face-to-face encounter of the small section meeting. In some courses writing will not be the principal form of submitted work. But in most courses it will, and we urge strongly that these courses be ones in which regular written work is exposed to the most conscientious faculty examination and critical response.

8) Each department of the College will make space in its own activities for time spent by its members in teaching in the freshman program. The College will be committed to the idea that

teaching in the freshman program will be of equal weight to other teaching activities in decisions bearing on promotion and tenure.

9) An auxiliary committee of the CEP, to be known as the Special Committee on the Freshman Program, will assume responsibility for the administration of the program. This committee will be appointed by the CEP, but its membership need not be restricted to members of the CEP. The committee will have two crucial functions, evaluative and managerial. The committee will receive proposals for freshman courses, which it may accept, refuse, or ask to have modified. The committee will also have to ensure that a sufficient number of courses are offered in each category in each semester. From time to time the committee may also find it necessary to take action to initiate new courses, for example, by bringing interested faculty together.

10) Each course will have a lifespan of no longer than three years.

On Critical Introduction

The conjunction of the words "critical" and "introduction" expresses best what we hope these courses will be about. This will strike some as odd because we are accustomed to thinking of these terms as antithetical. When we think of introduction, the word "basic" usually comes to mind. Basic things come "first," and we build on these: only when a certain level of expertise has been achieved can criticism begin. This model of the development of critical capacities has some validity, at least as learning ordinarily occurs within the framework of the disciplines or in relation to demarcated subject matters. In many fields the learner truly begins at the beginning, which may to some degree mean habituating the learner to unexamined routines. But even if we speak of learning within established sequences, we know that education at its best minimizes the passive acceptance of predigested content, and if this is true of learning within the disciplines, it is even more true of learning about the enterprise of

learning itself. Here one is at the frontiers at the outset. And if by critical we mean the exercise of evaluative judgment in the context of openness of mind, then criticism is never a mere ornament to education: it is essential at all levels, and vital at the beginning when attitudes toward learning are being formed. This is not a new idea at Amherst College. Related conceptions underlay the 1947 currriculum, the Problems of Inquiry courses of the 1966 curriculum, and the freshman Inquiry courses suggested by the CEP's 1971 report.

What will most distinguish these courses from others is that attention will be given to the ultimate aims and conditions of intellectual activity in a way that is rarely made explicit by professional academicians operating within their own fields. We speak too seldom of why we regard some problems as intellectually significant and others not, or why our canons of truth are what they are, or why we wish to know at all, or whether knowing ever does more harm than good, or what the responsibilities of the knower might be. We believe introductory courses to be ones in which a greatly heightened emphasis to such basic questions is appropriate.

We are convinced that these questions become most insistent when the great issues are broached, the vexatious problems that persist from one generation of scholarship to another: accordingly, this is the area in which we wish the introductory courses to operate. What is society? What can be said without words? What is a living thing? What is a person? The courses will address questions of this order not so much with the purpose of answering them, but as a way of talking about the academy from a more disinterested point of view. Each course will explore some matter of intellectual consequence. But its true aim should be nothing less than abetting a debate within the College about its own nature, a debate which freshmen can join at the beginning of their academic careers. They will examine existing intellectual traditions in relation to the great and recurrent expressions of puzzlement and wonder. They will treat scholarship as we now know it as the product of past and present choices of what to study and how. And they will deal openly with the fact that there are many reasons for the choice of one object of study

or mode of inquiry over another, and that these reasons have sometimes rested on assumptions and values that have little to do with the apparently distinterested goals of scholarship and research.

These courses will not take the traditional compartments of knowledge (the disciplines, subjects and divisions) as the starting point of learning, but will see this fragmentation itself as posing problems worthy of examination. We do not expect these courses to represent a repudiation of customary academic identities. As we have already said, we take the disciplines quite seriously as important bases of the academic life, and we expect this seriousness to be incorporated in the freshman courses. We do not ask the faculty to present themselves as seers or intellectual shamans: we realize that much of what we have to offer as teachers stems from our professional expertise in recognized disciplines and fields of study, and we do not ask our colleagues to renounce this essential part of their professional selves. Rather, we ask that in these courses the disciplines be taken for what they are: ways in which our intellectual culture has tried to cut up the great questions in order to come to terms with the pieces. These cuts will be taken seriously, but not for granted. It is this overall emphasis that we have in mind when we use the word "critical" to describe the introductory courses. At their best they will talk of gains, but also of losses: there will be an emphasis on possibilities opened up by particular choices, but also on possibilities closed. And of necessity there will be talk of responsibility—of the uses of knowledge, and the dilemmas these uses impose on the knower.

On Reasonable Distribution

The plan we have proposed does not guarantee distribution in any sense that rests on a scheme of broad and exhaustive categories of knowledge, method, or skill. We have given great thought to the categories we have proposed. In the course of our initial discussions it soon became plain that there are many possible theories about what the inherent divisions of knowledge are or ought to be. As time went on we came to the realization

that it was not a part of our mandate to attempt to settle such a matter. Hence we make no special claims for the three labels under which the freshman courses would fall. They are not presented as a theory of knowledge, nor are they intended to be prescriptive in the sense of defining the problems we really ought to study. Rather, they are perhaps best seen as "domains" within which questions are put—questions which have been, and continue to be, regarded as worth asking. The questions have been put differently in different ages and different cultures: they continue to be put differently by different individuals and disciplines. Standards of what constitute acceptable answers have likewise differed. Courses offered under rubrics such as these will have to pay attention to these differences, and it is this, in part, that will make them critical introductions to liberal studies. Multiplying the rubrics, as we have done, adds to this the assurance that all students will be exposed to a range of concerns underlying the intellectual life of the academy. This plan would not ensure exhaustive distribution, and it makes no such claim. But it will make it most improbable for an upperclassman not to have had exposure to a wide array of intellectual interests and points of view. Though the stated goal is more modest, we feel confident that the breadth of study entailed by this plan is in fact greater than that occasioned by the more traditional distribution requirement.

There is an additional advantage. We believe there to be real value in having students encounter the greatest possible number of faculty during the freshman year. We also believe it valuable for faculty to meet freshmen. To the degree that freshmen take large lecture courses this is minimized. Not only is contact with faculty relatively superficial in such courses, but the number of faculty a student can meet is regrettably small. As already noted, we hope that these courses will stress small seminar sections, but we also hope that other, supplementary formats will be utilized in such a way that students will be exposed to all the faculty teaching in a given course. In our opinion, it will be very important for students to see statements and points of view questioned, to get a sense of how faculty can learn from each other, to come to an understanding of the maturity of agreement and disagree-

ment. Quite apart from its importance as an educational ideal, this has the practical side-benefit of exposing students early in their careers at Amherst to numerous members of the faculty. As matters now stand, hearsay plays altogether too large a role in course selection, which, as we know, is often faculty selection. We believe that under the system here proposed, students would not only have a clearer idea of what there is to choose among, but would also simply know more about the faculty of the College.

THE ADJUNCT PROGRAM

MORE ADVANCED STUDENTS, those who have completed their freshman year and their introduction to the College, characteristically devote their attention to finding an appropriate major. Although concentrated study within a single discipline has not always been a part of liberal education, the depth and intensity of the intellectual experience such study affords seem well worth preserving. The curriculum we propose will not change the major itself or disturb the choice of major programs—departmental, interdepartmental, and independent—that the College now offers. (Further reflections on the subject of the major will be found in the following section.)

Yet while retaining the major, we also recognize that the focus and integration it gives to a student's academic career and the loyalty it therefore inspires might at the same time pose a threat to those things we most want a liberal education to achieve—range, flexibility, and criticality of mind. The focusing of attention, the acceptance of certain preliminary assumptions in order to get on with more advanced work, which are both necessary parts of a concentration program, could lead to a constriction of vision, an exclusive and unquestioning partisanship. The threat is particularly great when, as in the present curriculum, there is nothing to offset the major, no competing claim upon a student's time and attention. The new freshman courses we have proposed should alleviate this to some extent, but it is not enough to change the freshman year and leave upperclassmen no other commitment than fulfilling their concentration requirements. To do this might suggest that general education is somehow rudimentary, only a preliminary to more "elevated" specialization.

We are, therefore, proposing a new program for all upperclassmen, an "adjunct program" that will in part supplement and in part act as a countervailing weight to work within the major. The

program is to consist of four related courses (at least three of which lie outside the student's field of concentration) united by a common theme or question of the student's own devising. The design of the adjunct program will thus vary according to what each student, in consultation with an academic advisor, elects to do, but every program must of necessity involve a variety of courses representing different departments in the College. Students should, in fact, select the theme of their programs with this in mind—the issue must be something which no single discipline can uniquely claim for its own and no one approach exhaust, such issues as: "Reason and Imagination in Science," "The Social Responsibilities of the Arts," "Cultural and Historical Relativism," "The Roots of War," and so on. (These titles are merely suggestive. It will be the business of individual students and their advisors to define the issues that particularly engage them and that seem capable as well of sustaining a coherent program.)

The adjunct program is meant to encourage independent speculation and intellectual breadth, both of which, as we have argued, are as important to the intellectual life of upperclassmen as they are to freshmen. The ability to criticize and change one's assumptions, to reformulate one's goals and set out in fresh educational directions, must not end when the choice of a field of concentration has been made, just as education itself must not end when a student leaves the College.

We also believe that the adjunct program will be sophisticated enough to make breadth exciting for upper-level students because it allows them an integrated academic experience. This feature is especially important, for it distinguishes the adjunct from more familiar schemes designed to expand student elections. Unlike most distribution programs, the adjunct is not a mass of heterogeneous and piecemeal requirements. Nor does it suggest, as such requirements can, that to attain breadth one must sacrifice coherence. Breadth has too often been treated as an end in itself, valuable at any cost. Yet in the absence of either rationale or internal continuity, required programs of this sort breed a condescending attitude toward the very intellectual expansiveness they are designed to encourage.

While we believe in breadth, we also believe that it is an instrument rather than an end of education. The goal is to excite a sense of endless possibility, to inspire a curiosity that will ultimately outlast the four years of undergraduate study and survive the transition to life outside the walls of the classroom. Broad exposure also acts as a check on parochialism and a corrective to distortion, providing students with a basis for "placing" and evaluating the various kinds of knowledge claims they must confront both in their own specializations and in the world at large. The adjunct program is designed to be broadening in just these ways, to inspire curiosity and provide additional perspective, while avoiding what makes most alternative requirements seem severely atomized and prohibitive. We believe that only such a program, which offers not a scattered and superficial acquaintance but something with a coherence of its own, will effectively counter narrow specialization and illustrate the uses of diversity.

We believe that through their experience in the freshman year, students will arrive at the confidence and the sense of possibility that they will need to construct an effective adjunct program. They will already have worked, to some extent, outside departmental divisions and, moreover, they will have a better idea about the range of activities that go on at the College than is now the case. The freshman year and the adjunct program are interdependent proposals, together giving students a sense of overall continuity in their college education.

Above all else, we hope that the adjunct program will itself be instructive—beyond whatever theme or problem a student happens to pursue. In constructing the program students should learn something about how greatly effort and decision contribute to the shape of one's own knowledge. Knowing is an activity, a making and a doing. Because so much of what a student encounters at the College is already "made," shaped by individual teachers but also by a more remote history of choices, discoveries, and even failures that are invisible to students, they might easily be led to think that the educational experience they acquire is natural and inevitable and that knowing is simply a passive accumulation of information. But to learn the answer to

a question without learning how to question or that different questions give rise to different answers is to be "well informed" without becoming "well educated." In posing questions and combining courses to create the adjunct program, then, students will be making something of their own, and come to see that what they know is contingent upon what they ask and where they then look for answers. If the program accomplishes only this much and no more, we will be well satisfied. Indeed, we think that there can be no better reason for any curricular proposal than its power to teach something about the nature of learning itself.

Provisions of the Adjunct Program

Requirements

1) As stated above, the program will consist of four courses, together touching upon some theme or illuminating some problem that the student has elected to pursue. Courses should be drawn from departments outside the field of concentration, although a single course in the major will be accepted. Courses at other institutions in the Valley will be eligible, with the advisor's consent, along with courses at Amherst. No more than one "Special Topics" course is to be included among the courses making up the program and none of the three courses designated as "Introduction to Liberal Studies" may be used to satisfy the adjunct requirement.

2) Typically, a student will plan the adjunct program during the first half of the sophomore year and begin it during the latter half of that year. Course work for the program should be completed by the end of the first semester of the senior year, and the written description of the program submitted to the advisor for approval soon thereafter. When the advisor has approved it, the student will take it to the Registrar, no later than the final day of classes at the end of the senior year. Adjustments in this schedule may occur, with the advisor's consent, if circumstances make them necessary. We expect, though, that the focus of the adjunct

program will remain in the sophomore and junior years. Courses taken before this, although they may well stimulate interests that later shape the adjunct program will not count toward its completion. The adjunct is, after all, designed for more advanced students, to accompany and illuminate their deliberations about the major. Reaching back to courses one has already taken would severely impair this aim. At the same time, we are aware that transfer students who enter Amherst for the first time during their junior year, should have the opportunity to consult with an advisor about the possibility of using courses they have taken at another institution as part of the program, with the provision that their programs include further course work at Amherst as well. Students who plan to spend their junior year abroad or at another institution in this country should ordinarily be able to continue their adjunct programs while they are away.

3) Upon completion of the adjunct program, the student will provide a short title and a written statement (of no more than three pages) explaining and defending its design. The writing will provide an opportunity to reflect on the program as a whole, to see its scope and integrity. It is the necessary final step in the program, the moment when inchoate intentions become articulate and when students confront their efforts with the crucial detachment only writing can give them. The statement will be subject to the criticism of the student's current advisor (the major advisor, ordinarily), who may request revisions before giving it final approval. Only when the statement has been approved will the program be complete and the title entered on the student's transcript. The statement itself will become part of the student's permanent record. The Registrar will arrange for it to be sent out with the transcript only when the student requests that this be done.

In describing and justifying their programs, students will outline the motives and expectations that gave rise to the program and then describe what they actually discovered by the time it was complete. The contribution of each of the four courses to the overall program will be explained and the student will conclude with suggestions about where one might "go from here"--what

additional questions now arise, what doubts remain unresolved, and what new interests have been stimulated by the experience.

The following is a hypothetical description of an adjunct program as it might appear in the student's records.

Title: The Changing Roles of Men and Women

Courses: Colloquium in Sex and Politics (Colloquim 23)
The Mode of Romance (European Studies 11)
Persons (Philosophy 62)
Men and Women in Literature (English 25)

Description: I began with a vague sense that a number of different courses at the College had something to say about where we have been and where we are going in our evolving sense of sexual identity and the relationship between men and women. I had hoped that the answers were all waiting there, if only I could put together what the various courses had to teach me, but I have since learned that things are not that easy or that obvious. Too many competing needs and responsibilities are involved in the relationship between the sexes . . .

From my literary courses, I learned something about how it feels to be a member of the "opposite sex," but I also discovered how much of classical literature is based on an exploitation of sexual differences. . . . In my philosophy course I began to consider how "who I am" is and is not related to my gender, and to explore the connections between my concept of myself, my conception of other persons, and the moral and social obligations involved in personal relationships. . . . The Colloquim on Sex and Politics showed me that the two were connected, but not in the way I had supposed they would be . . .

For me, the future of sexual relationships still remains in doubt. I see several possibilities emerging—radical isolation of individuals, a return to traditional marriages and families as economic conditions make it harder to employ as many people as want jobs, a new androgynous world of shared tasks and less polarized sexual identities. To pursue these questions and help me to resolve a few of my own doubts, I intend to continue reading in the following areas . . .

Advising

The advisor will have the final authority to approve or deny the proposed adjunct program a student presents. Since the pro-

gram is begun during the sophomore year, the initial stages of planning and approval will involve the college advisor (whose role will be detailed in the section on academic advising), rather than the major advisor. The student will work out an informal "statement of intent" with this advisor, outlining the general scope of the program and listing a provisional group of courses (approximately seven or eight) which seems suitable for the program and from among which will be selected the four courses required for the finished program. Course offerings may change over time, of course, and intentions are always subject to revision, but the statement will serve as a record of what both student and advisor have tentatively agreed to and help to guide later revisions, should these prove necessary.

When transferring, at the beginning of the junior year, to the major advisor, the student will present a copy of the statement of intent and, ordinarily, continue to follow the plan already devised. Substantial changes, radically altering the focus of the program or eliminating the original pool of courses from which the courses making up the program were to be elected, should normally be discussed with the college advisor, as well as with the major advisor, in order to assure the independence of the adjunct program. If feasible, both advisors would be available for consultation when the student is drafting the written description of the program that will finally appear in the records.

Monitoring the Program

A list of the adjunct programs completed each year will be made available to students and faculty of the College. This will serve two purposes. First, it will give some indication of the kind of work that is possible and assist those students who are currently involved in constructing their own programs and the faculty who must advise them. But such a list should also help to regulate the quality of the program as a whole and prevent fluctuations in the level of seriousness with which it is undertaken. Sample essays, chosen by advisors as exceptionally well done, will also be available in the Library for any members of the College to peruse. Again, the goal is to assist and stimulate to keep the level of work as high as possible.

Benefits to Be Derived from the Adjunct Program

Our general reasons for proposing the adjunct program have already been stated above, but there are other, pragmatic reasons as well for instituting such a program. First there are the consequences it would have for academic advising at the College, clarifying what is now too often a frustrating and vague relationship for faculty and students alike. Constructing an independent program of this sort would give that relationship a framework and a genuine pertinence. Rather than unfocused discussion about what the student "likes to take" or what the advisor thinks is "good," there would be a larger purpose guiding the exchange and something to refer to in making decisions. Then too, advisors would know more about the shape of the minds they are confronting and students would have clearer expectations about the kinds of information and counsel they might hope to receive. Any particular advisory relationship could, of course, exceed these bounds, but none should fall short of the sort of intellectual adventure and useful criticism that designing the adjunct program would entail. Moreover, since the program begins before the student is committed to a concentration, the college advisor is part of the total educational development and the student will continue to have access to someone known throughout the college career.

The adjunct program gives both advisor and advisee some sense of their respective authority and responsibility. It will reflect the quality of mind, venturesomeness, and strength of commitment that a student possesses far more tellingly than any prefabricated distribution requirements. (It may be something that the faculty as a whole considers when deliberating difficult honors cases, although it should only be considered among the "additional evidence" and never become part of the primary criteria used for awarding honors.) And, while the real "penalties" and "rewards" of such a program are intrinsic to it, the practice of including a written statement in the student's permanent record and placing the title of the program on the transcript will give students an additional reason to perform well,

since the program will be something that identifies them to the world beyond Amherst College.

Ultimately the contribution of the adjunct program will be to the curriculum of the College as a whole. It could, for example, provide an indication of what interests and concerns are deepest in our students, what experience and expectations they are bringing to our courses. One might be stimulated to create a new course: at the very least, circulating information about the various programs that have been undertaken should provoke conversation between members of the faculty. As the interdisciplinary thrust of the freshman program gives impetus to the adjunct, so the adjunct in turn will assist the College's collective imagination and may well stimulate ideas for new courses in the freshman year. But the life of the mind is not confined to college classrooms, and the adjunct program should utimately have the more subtle and wide-ranging effect of helping both faculty members and students to find the intellectual affinities that are too often hidden even in this small college. Finally, we think that the adjunct program will be one of the ways in which we show prospective students and the community at large what is peculiar to an Amherst education—a balanced appreciation for tradition and experiment, individual and communal scholarship.

THE MAJOR AND HONORS

THERE IS SCARCELY any disagreement among us that an undergraduate education should include a certain amount of concentration. Traditionally the degree and kind of concentration have been governed by the major requirement, which, like the 32-course requirement for graduation, seems so unavoidable that we often forget it exists and describe our present curriculum as having "no requirements." But the major requirement does exist, and its fulfillment accounts for at least one-quarter of every student's course elections. This makes the major a significant component in any curriculum of which it is a part. Its very invisibility suggests we should examine it more closely.

There are, of course, sound educational reasons for concentrating and they are so widely accepted that it seems hardly necessary to state them at all. Perhaps an example will suffice. A good senior undergraduate physics major has at least a starting point for thinking effectively about any natural phenomenon whatsoever. At the same time this student will have acquired a deep respect and appreciation for the natural beauty in things hidden from the casual eye. This is a fine thing. It is an accomplishment which has no exact counterpart in other parts of the curriculum. Such intellectual powers require concentrated work and attention for their development. A student who has taken one introductory course in physics will feel no such competence. It takes time. More generally, in any major program, one seeks to become thoroughly familiar with one's chosen discipline, discovering and rediscovering and rehearsing the interconnections of its subject matter. One seeks to know a large subject minutely, with ever increasing sensitivity. This process, for surely it never really ends, is valuable in itself. Knowledge of a discipline in depth is worth having. As teachers we have believed this so strongly in the past that we have required our students to engage

in this kind of learning. Finding this same argument compelling now, the committee recommends that the major requirement not be significantly altered.

Along with the educational reasons for concentrating, there are other factors that support a major requirement, or at least have kept us from recommending its abolition. For example, there is considerable choice among majors, so that the major is usually conformable to students' interests. Furthermore, the major allows departments to offer advanced courses, assuming acquaintance with elementary material, a circumstance very attractive to the faculty. Students may perceive their majors as very important to their future plans. We mention these additional reasons only to point out that there has not been the same pressure on the major requirement to justify itself in purely educational terms that there has been on other parts of the curriculum.

There is a potential danger: the major requirement could continue to exist as a comfortable tradition even had it ceased to fulfill the educational ideal originally outlined for it. Its justification might slip over into some pragmatic accommodation in practice. For this reason we shall describe more explicitly the role we envision for the major in our curriculum, as we have done for our other programs.

The major program in our curriculum would be balanced and complemented by the new programs we have proposed. The major would not be preeminent but collateral. The introductory program and the adjunct would underscore the importance of activities outside the major by giving them institutional status. Furthermore, the introductory program should make the choice of major a more informed one than it may now be, and place that discipline in the context of others in such a way that it could not assume disproportionate importance. We look forward to a particularly interesting interaction between the major and the adjunct in the sophomore year, when each is near its beginning. Both programs are expressions of interest on the student's part, but they must be distinct, one centering on a theme or a question. It is likely that for many students it will not be clear which courses will lead to the adjunct and which to the major until perhaps the end of the sophomore year. This could have the

happy effect of bringing students into the major in response to specific questions of the type that motivate the adjunct program. It is impossible to foresee the consequences exactly, but the prospect is exciting.

The major program does, however, have peculiarities which set it apart from the rest of the curriculum and require separate consideration. The major, quite apart from its educational role within the College, may serve another purpose. In extreme cases students may see their majors as merely instrumental, serving only as stepping stones to graduate school, professional school, or employment. The College cannot admit the validity of so narrow a view without relinquishing control over a vital area of its curricular policy. The major program in particular, and perhaps the curriculum in general, would become subject to pressure from outside the College on grounds that are careerist rather than educational. Cynicism about the nature and value of education would be the almost certain consequence if such influences were allowed to shape the curriculum, either in theory or in practice. Because the major can admit a careerist interpretation, an interpretation we consider inappropriate, we have emphasized that in our curriculum we intend the major to serve an educational purpose. The major is intrinsically valuable within the College and its value is independent of its utility outside the College.

We do not intend, however, that the social context of education should be ignored. We only mean that such considerations should not assume a primary and determining role in the structure and spirit of the curriculum. Our curriculum is an affirmation of what is unique about this college, which is to say how this college is distinct from its social context. With this sense of itself, the College may serve society, but may also confront it. If education is to be liberating in the fullest sense, for example, it should liberate one from the narrowness of careerism and all such constricted notions of the uses of knowledge. The concentration called for in the major requirement is narrowing of subject matter, but not a narrowing of vision. Questions of teleology, of goals, of values, of justice, are always in order. Although it is not uniquely the responsibility of the major departments to raise

such questions, we feel, as a general matter, that the major program has in its care an important part of every student's intellectual maturation, and that intellectual maturity includes the recognition of the place of the College and the intellectual life in a larger social context.

As noted in the historical introduction, Amherst College has an honors program which has essentially not changed since 1938. Many curricular reports have pronounced the honors program sound, including the 1975 CEP report, which considered and rejected a number of possible alternatives. We concur and recommend no change.

Indeed, we believe that elective honors work—now understood as a piece of sustained, independent work undertaken in the senior year—will occupy a more natural place in our proposed curriculum than it does in the present one. Our proposals recognize explicitly that there is a variety of experiences which can contribute in distinct ways to an undergraduate education, and that mastery of subject matter is only one of these. In the introductory and adjunct programs, and again in the honors program, the emphasis is not so much on subject matter as such, as on the process of knowing and questioning, shaping and criticizing. These three programs can be thought of as a sequence in which the student assumes more and more independence.

ACADEMIC ADVISING

THE INTRODUCTIONS TO LIBERAL STUDIES, the adjunct program, and the major are meant as interrelated strategies to guide students' academic life and to foster their intellectual growth. While designed to improve students' chances of avoiding uncritical or merely random course selection, these programs do not replace the contribution of good advising. To the contrary, they invite a livelier participation by the advisor in the student's ordering of a course of studies. While well aware that individual faculty members sometimes provide important service in personal and vocational counselling, our concern is with academic advising. Such advising, we believe, should be modified as part of the commitment accompanying adoption of new curricular programs.

With the establishment of the Introductions to Liberal Studies as required freshman courses and of the adjunct programs, to be planned predominantly in the sophomore year, advising in the first two years will give new opportunities for serious discussion of intellectual concerns. We believe that these opportunities can be better fulfilled if certain changes are instituted in the formal advisory system. We recommend:

that advising of freshmen and sophomores be universally shared among the teaching faculty in the academic departments;

that parity in the obligation of freshman-sophomore advising be established among the faculty;

that continuity in the student-advisor relationship be increased;

that more immediacy be given to the earliest encounters of new students with their advisors; and

that students with experience at Amherst be given a role in advising newcomers.

Not all our recommendations here are suitable for formal faculty vote, but we hope in the passages that follow to suggest how such changes would operate in practice.

As witness of the College's commitment to the liberal education of undergraduates, all academic faculty will be expected to serve as academic advisors of freshmen and sophomores ("college advisors"), in addition to their duties as departmental advisors. The student's college advisor will be assigned for two years, and to make such continuity more likely, faculty members planning to be absent the following year will not be assigned freshman advisees. To give students the benefit of faculty experience with the curriculum, no first-year faculty members will be freshman advisors.

In order that advising be evenly shared, and to increase the likelihood that advising not be a hurried affair, no faculty member will advise more than five freshman and five sophomores. (Our best estimates suggest that each entering class of approximately 375 can be divided among approximately 80 faculty eligible for college advisorship.) Whenever possible, freshmen will be paired with teachers in courses they have selected for the first year, but we conclude that universal faculty involvement in the undertaking and parity in advisee assignment are the more important considerations. To summarize: the initial advisor, the college advisor, will be responsible for academic guidance of the student, including formulation of the adjunct program, until the end of the sophomore year.

Because the adjunct program seems better planned with an advisor who has known the student since entrance and is not primarily concerned with the student's departmental specialization, the college advisor will remain the advisor of record, even for sophomores who declare majors. The sophomore with a major will of course consult representatives of the major department on course selection, but registration forms will still be signed by the college advisor. (We believe that formal declaration of a major should not be allowed before the sophomore year.) Students will normally declare majors at the end of the sophomore year. If exceptions have been made and some juniors have not declared majors, they will continue with their college advisors,

if present at the College, or be assigned new college advisors. No student should be allowed to register in courses for the senior year without having declared a major and been assigned a departmental advisor.

Paradigmatically, then, the student will have two official advisors during four years at the College—the college advisor during the first two years and the major advisor during the last two. Of course, unexpected absences of faculty members, changes in major, late decisions on a major, and occasional personal incompatibilities will mean that some students will have more than two advisors.

Having heard various complaints on the matter in our interviews with students, we hope that new students' introduction to the College can be beneficially redefined and expanded.

We believe that material sent to entering freshmen during the summer should include a brochure more helpful in course planning than the catalog or other materials currently sent, particularly in light of the need to understand the purposes of the Introductions to Liberal Studies and to select among them.

We propose that the fall orientation program for freshmen and transfer students be planned so that no formal curricular counselling occur on the day of arrival. With that day reserved for welcoming activities and settling in, the first "academic" day for new students would be freed to begin with an informal meeting with advisors (say, from 9:00–10:30 a.m.). By following such initial counselling, the Bazaar (say, from 10:45 a.m. to 12:15 p.m.) could be better utilized, since students would have in mind questions about specific course content, preferable sequence of courses, etc.

We recommend that juniors and seniors be brought more actively into the orientation process. Each department should arrange for the presence at the Bazaar of at least one junior or senior with experience in its courses. These students might well consider additional ways to help newcomers find their way in the Amherst curriculum.

Freshmen would be asked to schedule a second meeting with their advisors during the afternoon following the Bazaar, and advisors might well reserve final approval of course selection

until this second meeting.

The increased number of transfer students admitted during the transition to becoming a college for both women and men has drawn attention to special problems of transfer students. It needs to be more fully recognized that though new to Amherst, these students are not new to college life. The adjunct program will be an unfamiliar and yet rather pressing matter for most of them, and though they need to hear about the conception of the Introduction to Liberal Studies, these are not the courses in which they will be enrolling. Their orientation, in short, should differ significantly from that for freshmen.

For transfer students, in addition to their meetings with advisors, we propose a special seminar, arranged by the Office of the Dean of Students and held before the Bazaar. At the seminar, a panel of faculty members and students with experience at Amherst, including some who came as transfer students, would discuss the curricular ideals of the College and the various programs designed to fulfill them.

THE CURRICULUM AND THE INSTITUTION

WE HAVE ARGUED throughout our presentation that education should be viewed as a process rather than a product, that what we hope our curriculum will inculcate is a way of thinking that has less to do with "knowing all the answers" than with the capacity to penetrate the assumptions latent in the question and, whenever necessary, frame new questions of one's own. Our proposals, therefore, require little of students in the way of mastering specific skills or bodies of information. For reasons already cited, we believe that this approach best reflects the ideal of liberal education as it has been and continues to be understood at this institution.

But whatever the advantages of the scheme advocated here, it has one feature that may strike some as a distinct disadvantage: it does not give the institution absolute and unequivocal directions for the allocation of its resources. One of the apparent, although usually unstated, benefits of curricula with many requirements is how greatly they simplify matters of institutional priority. A curriculum with many requirements is one in which certain things "have to be done," and this, in turn, makes it relatively easy to decide where funds should go and what kinds of competencies to seek in hiring and retaining faculty. Our curriculum does not really provide guidelines of this sort. Rather our proposal is one which puts a premium on certain, more general characteristics of the institution and the individuals who make up its faculty. Of the latter, for example, it would require intelligence, commitment to undergraduate education, high competence within a discipline or field of study, a critical regard for the responsibilities of knowledge, and the ability to flourish intellectually in interdisciplinary teaching. To state these criteria is not to mandate any significant change: we believe that

these are the primary considerations used in hiring faculty now.

Our proposal also has broader implications touching on the structure of the institution as a whole. Our freshman courses and our adjunct program presuppose a faculty with diverse training and differing departmental affiliations. Without such diversity and difference, the crucial moments of comparison and contrast would be lost and all our efforts to make students more aware of the nature of the "conceptual instruments" they are employing would be empty. Thus a curriculum like ours, which honors reasoned choice and experiment as necessary elements in any program of study and which aims above all else to promote critical reflection and openness of mind, in the end requires a great deal of the institution implementing it. For the curriculum truly to honor intelligent choice, there must be a sufficient range of choice: if a critical and open mind is what we chiefly hope to inspire, then we must look not only to the freshman year and the adjunct program, but to the overall array of courses and programs that that College makes available, to see how this array might in itself contribute to or impede the development of such qualities of mind. The College as a whole is a place of learning, as well as its individual classrooms, and in the final analysis the "spirit of the place" is as much a part of the curriculum as any formal set of course requirements.

The activities that go on throughout the College have an impact on students and faculty alike, even when each person does not directly engage in every activity. The impact is twofold: giving those pursuits that are offered at the College the patina of legitimacy (and tarnishing as somehow illegitimate those that are not), and at the same time contributing to a general setting in which informal acquaintance and the casual exchange of information and enthusiasm may take place. Thus a student who is not taking a foreign language, but knows others who are, will perforce have a richer sense of possibility and a different view of what it might be valuable to know than one who inhabits a strictly monolingual environment. In much the same way, the sense of what other faculty members are doing alters the context in which one's own teaching and research take place, providing a needed stimulus and challenge.

We must recall as well that students entering Amherst College arrive with ideas of the world and of themselves that are circumscribed by the contingent limits of their own experience and by preconceptions of what they have not experienced. If the organization of the College as a whole, by the omissions and the emphases in its offerings, is circumscribed in the same way, then those preconceptions will be subtly reinforced and our local efforts at intellectual self-criticism (via the liberal studies courses and the adjunct program) will be far less challenging. The institution itself must confront and go beyond the *données* of the moment and the conveniences of its particular social milieu. This is not to argue that we should disregard "relevance" or strive for purposelessness. Indeed, we are making the opposite point: that intellectual freedom should not be confused with leisure or inconsequentiality; that we recognize the difficulty inherent in maintaining both the autonomy and the social responsibility of any place of learning. A college must be an institution which preserves the past, protects alternative perspectives, and fosters creative enterprise even (or perhaps especially) when other institutions in the society do not.

And so, in sum, the success of our curriculum does require a certain institutional context. Nor do we believe that this context is peculiar to our curriculum alone: liberal education itself needs such a setting. But how can a principle so general be applied? One obvious realm of application is the "institutional considerations" that are invoked to make decisions on appointment requests and tenure. We suggest that these considerations must include a sufficient regard for the College's larger function as preserver, critic, and creator. The contribution of teachers, of courses and of programs of study should be judged by this tripartite criterion rather than by simple enrollment statistics. We also suggest that whatever local expediencies suggest themselves, it be borne in mind that only with a balanced commitment of resources will the College flourish as a place of learning. We must sustain both traditional areas of knowledge and newer forms of study; we must attend to other epochs and alien and minority cultures, as well as to what is proximate and dominant; and we must foster innovation through a commitment to performing,

making, and doing that balances our commitment to studying what others have already made and done. When confronting practical constraints, it is this—the ideal condition of the College as a whole—that must serve as our guide.

We foresee that the coming years, in which there will continue to be restrictions on the size of the faculty and limits on other expenditures as well, will pose a peculiar threat to the ideal that we have posited. Although the threat takes many forms, we have, for convenience, given it a single name, "parochialism," a convergence of forces sharing the same effect: stasis, a failure of significant interaction both within the institution and without, intellectual isolation. In light of this, we think it fitting that we end our treatment of curricular reform with a more general caveat for the future of the College. We believe that there are certain categories of offerings which the College must sustain if the curriculum is truly to represent the intellectual culture to which we wish to bring our students. We are convinced that for the most part the College is providing such an array of offerings now. If we seem, then, to single out certain concerns at the expense of others, it is because we recognize that we are speaking at a particular moment in the history of an institution and are thus more sensitive to clear and present dangers that we would see it overcome.

The Need to Avoid Cultural Parochialism

Amherst College is located in a particular social and cultural setting. Under the circumstances, it is natural that the intellectual milieu of the College should be strongly influenced by the ideas, values, and outlook of the English-speaking world. This is quite understandable, and, indeed, we can go further and concede that it is desirable that this be the case. Our own cultural and historical roots are bound to be of great intellectual moment to us. Before we can know anything, we must know ourselves: who we are, and what we have been. But there is also a danger in this, the danger of cultural insularity.

Clichés abound in discussions of cultural parochialism. The world, we are told, is getting smaller; we must live with other

nations in ways we have not in the past. Yet familiar though these points may be, they are true and important. Moreover, we would also stress our conviction that openness to the non-English speaking world, even apart from geo-political considerations, is important to the liveliness and representativeness of the Amherst curriculum. The world of learning has itself become far more cosmopolitan in recent times, and it is important that the College reflect this. Not to do so would be to insulate our students from some of the most significant realities of our era. It would also be to deprive our curriculum of the breadth of concerns on which its vitality depends.

While not wishing to narrow the implications of what we have just said, there are at least two points we wish to make explicit. First, we feel that the College should continue to be, as it has been in the past, a hospitable environment for instructional programs with cross-cultural dimensions such as Asian, Black and European Studies. We do not necessarily advocate the augmenting of existing programs or the addition of any new ones; we realize this might well be beyond the resources of the College at the present time. In any case, we realize that there are other claims of equal legitimacy within the institution. However, we wish to say generally that the state of mind that sustains such programs should be given every encouragement within the College.

Second, and at least as important, we come to the matter of languages. We have not advocated a language requirement. We are not convinced that requiring language study will guarantee that students will get from languages what they should, nor is it our impression that the language faculty wishes to reach a captive audience. We do believe, however, that language study should play an important role at Amherst, both on its own account, and because of the other intellectual opportunities which it unlocks. We also believe that, even in its initial stages, language study is worthy of college "credit." Such study can and should provoke profound intellectual questions—about the nature of "reality" and of human thought, about what is universal and what is peculiar to a single culture—as well as arouse a deepened appreciation for the richness and variety of linguistic

structure. Furthermore, we do not believe that Amherst College should attempt to economize by relying on other institutions for language instruction. Such an argument, if taken seriously, could apply to any discipline or field of study. We do not consider this a useful way to think about the College's own priorities. *We* must decide what *we* consider important, and we must then teach it in our own way here. The languages are important. We are not at all sure what the minimum array of languages should be at a college like Amherst. We suspect, however, that we are quite close to that minimum now, and we urge that the College take pains to ensure that no further diminution of our language offerings take place.

The Need to Avoid Disciplinary Parochialism

The position of the arts in liberal education has been controversial from the time of their inclusion in college curricula, beginning about a century ago. Distrust of the arts has sprung from a dual heritage: first, its emphasis upon practical application of knowledge, and second, the Romantic notion of the arts as stemming from sensibility rather than intellect. This view, in which the arts were seen as peripheral, has been superseded by a more recent distinction between those intellectual activities that are analytic, experimental and "objective," and those that are synthetic, self-defining and personal. One result of these traditional perspectives is that in our own culture the arts are treated with mingled embarrassment and piety—as impractical but decorative, valuable insofar as they remain tangential and provide an escape from more pressing concerns. Until lately, the College has reflected this societal view in its curriculum.

We believe that the time has come to assert that the arts, and study of the arts, require intellectual discipline comparable to that exercised in the pursuit of the more traditional areas of knowledge, and further to assert that "creativity," "imagination" and "sensation" are qualities of mind as requisite to the scientist, historian and philosopher as to the actor, musician and painter. Intelligence may act through different media and be brought to bear on different forms, and while these differences of media

and form may be important, we believe that the nature of the mental processes employed is more similar than different.

The arguments so frequently put forward in defense of liberal education in opposition to intellectual training that is narrowly instrumental, apply with equal force to study of the arts. For here is a case where the free play of the intellect is called upon to solve problems that are interesting for their own sake. It is through the arts, furthermore, no less than other disciplines, that we have shaped and contained our feelings, and given form to our values over the centuries. The study of the arts—their making, criticism, and history—is an honorable and venerable employment of the mind.

We have heard compelling testimony from many voices about the importance of the arts to any Amherst curriculum and have even heard eloquent proposals for specific requirements for all students in the performing arts. While we have rejected this particular solution, as we have the foreign language requirement and specific requirements in any discipline, we are convinced that the arts are forms of knowledge equal in importance to those more richly favored by the present allotment of the College's resources. The arts ought, we feel, to be regarded as essential to the curriculum and not as desirable luxuries, marginal enterprises, or merely cultural services to the community. Their peculiar and often expensive needs should not render them especially visible or vulnerable within the scope of our limited resources. Indeed, experience of these arts, as well as knowledge about them, must be recognized, fostered, and defended, both as a means to further understanding and, equally, as an end in itself. At stake are intellectual capacities as valuable as our capacity to figure, speak, or read.

The Need to Avoid Intellectual Parochialism

An attribute of the College which is a vital part of its spirit is its dedication to independent work, whether this takes the form of creative composition, scholarship, or scientific research. Our proposals have emphasized a necessary commitment of time to innovative teaching and academic advising. Yet we also believe

that a curriculum like ours that stresses from beginning to end the importance of questioning and criticizing, should find in formal research and independent thought one of its own highest expressions. The life and excitement of the College depend significantly on its ongoing scholarly and creative projects, and it is expected that both faculty and students will individually be engaged in such projects. Clearly this imposes a reciprocal obligation on the College as an institution to support the bases of this work, its laboratories and its libraries. Clearly, too, teaching load, release time, and grants to support research and creative projects will also affect the quality of the independent work that goes on at the College.

The Need to Assure Cooperation Among Departments

Finally, we feel that the College needs additional monitoring of its overall curricular condition. The current situation, in which departments confront their own needs and construct their own plans in near isolation, and then compete with each other for positions and funding, is not one which allows a sense of the larger pattern thus created. It is, moreover, a situation which puts immense pressure on smaller departments, which find themselves unable to meet their own staffing needs while lacking both the encouragement and the means for uniting their own interests with those of another department. The occasional cases of cooperative hiring which now occur do so on a more or less ad hoc basis, as a response to local exigencies and without a clear sense of their ultimate curricular implications. In light of this, and in light of the fact that cooperative endeavors will be an increasingly important resource if the faculty retains its present size and if budgetary restrictions become more severe, we recommend the following:

that the CEP take as a major responsibility the examination of the offerings of the College taken as a whole—and over a period of time, with the end of locating their tendencies, comparing the pattern with that of other institutions, and suggesting areas of apparent need;

that the CEP take new initiatives in advising and receiving the advice of departments of the College with respect to potential areas for interdepartmental cooperation—joint appointments, the sharing of equipment and lecture funds, etc.—guided by this sense of long-term curricular needs.

In sum, we deem it necessary that more sustained attention be given to the gathering and the interpreting of curricular information, and that ways be found to facilitate action based upon that information. There must be a channel for communication among departments that would help to make cooperative ventures less erratic and unstable, and further, there must be a way of making such ventures consonant with a larger vision of the curriculum.

We feel that this, our final recommendation, is a logical outcome of our own efforts. The Select Committee on the Curriculum was created, at least in part, in response to a shared sense of institutional fragmentation. It was evident to those who voted to establish this committee that the existing procedures of the College were not sufficient to overcome this fragmentation. But it is not simply the initial conditions to which our committee was a response, but the nature of our own deliberations about curricular reform and the meaning of liberal education itself that has persuaded us that "the need to assure cooperation among departments" is a pressing one. For we have come to believe that much of the best life of the College is in its cooperative endeavors and in the complex interplay among the disciplines.

MOTIONS

WE RECOMMEND:

I. That the three curricular divisions of the College be abolished. (The college catalog no longer mentions the three curricular divisions, but various reports continue to use these categories and the Faculty Handbook stipulates divisional representation on some faculty committees. This motion would end such practices.)

II. That the courses called freshman seminars be discontinued.

III. That the requirements for the Bachelor of Arts degree be redefined to include the following:

A. Each freshman will complete Introduction to Liberal Studies 1, 2, and 3 by the end of the freshman year; one of these courses must be taken the first semester, and normally no more than two may be taken in either semester. (This requirement does not apply to transfer students.)

B. Each student will complete an adjunct program of four courses united by a common theme or question.
   1) The plan of the adjunct program must be approved by the student's advisor.
   2) Normally the program will be started the second semester of the sophomore year and will end by the first semester of the senior year.
   3) At least three of the four courses must be chosen from outside the major.

4) Normally the courses will be chosen from different departments.
5) No more than one Special Topics course may be included.
6) Upon completion of the fourth course the student will prepare a title for the program pursued and a brief written statement describing it. The statement, to be approved by the student's advisor, will become part of the student's permanent record and the title of the program will be entered on the student's transcript. The statement is due no later than the final day of classes at the end of the senior year.
7) Transfer students must complete an adjunct program. If necessary, credit may be given for work taken prior to matriculation at Amherst.
(Although no formal action on the part of the faculty is needed, it should be remembered that certain other requirements for graduation remain in force. See Amherst College Catalog 1976–77, pp. 57–62.)

IV. That the advisory system be restructured to provide that:

A. Each freshman be assigned a "college advisor" who will remain the student's advisor of record through the end of the sophomore year.

B. All academic faculty will serve as college advisors, with assignment divided as equally as possible. As far as practicable, freshmen will be assigned to advisors who are their teachers, preferably from small or sectioned courses.

C. At the beginning of the junior year students will be assigned an advisor of record from the department of concentration (the major advisor).

D. A transfer student with less than four semesters' credit will be assigned a college advisor until the student completes the equivalent of two years' work.

E. The orientation period be modified to give freshmen and new transfer students more effective consultation with their advisors. (The faculty requests that the Dean of Students arrange the needed restructuring of Orientation.)

V. That the timing of the declaration of a major be regularized through provisions that:

A. Freshmen may not declare majors.

B. Students will normally declare majors at the end of the sophomore year.

VI. That an auxiliary committee of the Committee on Educational Policy, to be known as the Special Committee on the Freshman Program, be established.

VII. That this curriculum become effective with the class of 1982.

APPENDIX 1

Some Demographic Thoughts

I. Teachers needed for Introduction to Liberal Studies courses.

A. *Assumptions:*

1. A freshman class of 375 students.
2. Courses structured such that one teacher is responsible for 15 students.
3. Each freshman takes three Introductions to Liberal Studies the first year.

B. *Conclusions:*

1. A maximum of 25 teachers per each Introduction to Liberal Studies category will be needed. For the year 75 teachers are needed, approximately 60–65% of the teachers available. (This estimate is arrived at by assuming a base of 140 teaching faculty from which is subtracted an estimated 15 faculty on leave for an entire year. The resulting pool of 125 includes an estimated 10 first-year faculty who may or may not participate in an Introduction to Liberal Studies teaching the first year.)
2. A possible distribution of faculty for one Introduction to Liberal Studies category for one year might look like this:

Semester 1	*Semester 2*
Course A—4 faculty	Course D—4 faculty
Course B—5 faculty	Course E—4 faculty
Course C—3 faculty	Course F—5 faculty

II. Effect of Introduction to Liberal Studies program on enrollment in '11' courses and other introductory offerings.

A. *Assumptions:*

1. A "typical" freshman elects during the first year four '11' courses. Two-thirds of the freshmen also elect a freshman seminar. In additon other introductory courses (principally language courses) are elected.

2. Over four years a "typical" student elects nine '11' courses. (Information for these two assumptions was provided by the Associate Registrar and is representative for a student in the class of 1976.)

B. *Conclusions:*

1. It is difficult to predict what effect the Introduction to Liberal Studies requirement will have on enrollment in introductory courses. In one sense freshmen will have three fewer electives in the first year and one might expect enrollment to suffer in '11' courses. However, it is not at all certain that it will be these courses and not other curricular offerings that will not be taken. Two-thirds of the class will elect a course in place of the freshman seminars they might otherwise have taken. Finally, it should be pointed out that the election of '11' courses is not confined to the first year. Any possible effect of the Introduction to Liberal Studies requirement is reduced, therefore, to the dimension of three required courses out of a total of 32 possible courses. It is our opinion that enrollment in introductory courses will not be significantly affected by the Introduction to Liberal Studies requirement.

III. Effect of Introduction to Liberal Studies program on total course offerings.

A. *Assumptions:*

1. The Introduction to Liberal Studies program will require 75 teachers per year.

2. All teaching faculty will participate in teaching Introduction to Liberal Studies courses.

3. The teaching load for a "typical" faculty member is two courses per semester and is not expected to increase.

B. *Conclusions:*

1. Over a three-year period 225 teachers would be needed for Introduction to Liberal Studies courses. For the same period 345–375 teachers are available (see I,B,1). So over a three-year period about two-thirds of the available faculty are needed to teach in Introduction to Liberal Studies courses. Put another way, each member of the faculty would be expected to teach in an Introduction to Liberal Studies course two semesters out of every three years (leaves accounted for). Therefore, from a total course offering for three years of twelve courses, two, or 17%, would be Introductions to Liberal Studies. Which two courses would be "given up" is hard to predict. For some it would be the freshman seminar or a colloquium. For others it may occasionally be a section in a departmental introductory course. For still others a more advanced departmental offering might be taught less often.

2. The above calculation assumes full participation in the Introduction to Liberal Studies program. If, for whatever reasons, 20% of the available faculty are assumed never to participate, then approximately 25 fewer teachers per year are available. Therefore, under this assumption, 25 faculty would have to teach an Introduction to Liberal Studies course three semesters in three years and give up 25% of what they now do.

3. On the other hand, some faculty may choose to participate more than two out of six semesters, and in that case, other members need not participate so often.

IV. Numerical implications of the advising program.

A. *Assumptions:*

1. A freshman class of 375.

2. A transfer group of 35 per year, 25 (estimated) of whom enter as third-year students.

3. College advisors to be selected from all teaching faculty in the academic departments except for first-year teachers.

4. A faculty member unable to serve two consecutive years will not be selected.

5. An average of 25 faculty are on leave for one or both semesters in any given year.

B. *Conclusions:*

1. The number of available college advisors is about 80. (This estimate is arrived at by subtracting from a base of 140 the 50 faculty on leave over any two-year period, plus the ten new faculty.) Each faculty advisor will have a maximum of ten college advisees per year. The year before or following a leave, the faculty member would generally have a maximum of five.

2. In addition each member of the faculty would be expected to advise some departmental majors. The number of such advisees will vary from department to department and from year to year.

3. The majority of transfer students will be advised by a major advisor. The ten or so transfers who enter as second-year students will need a college advisor for the adjunct program. Use could be made of faculty who plan a leave after one year.

APPENDIX 2

Report of the Task Force on Freshman Seminars

to the

Select Committee on the Curriculum

Introduction

Freshman Seminars have been many things to many people. A clear definition of methods or objectives for the Seminars has never been spelled out. Although a Coordinator has been designated each year, staff meetings have not been held for the purpose of working toward a common policy. A wide range of styles is evident among the seminars that have been offered. Some who have taught them are wildly enthusiastic about the results; others consider their own attempt to have been a noble experiment that failed. Some who have not taught them feel that Freshman Seminars do not belong in the Curriculum.

The Task Force has made use of a variety of resources to find out what Freshman Seminars have been like in practice: the annual reports of the Coordinators for the years 1972, 1973, 1974; self-evaluations by the teachers (faculty and senior assistants) in these same years; an interview by the Task Force of Dean Gifford; data requested from Professor Grose, Director of Institutional Research; a questionnaire filled out by the present Resident Advisors concerning their own experience with Freshman Seminars and that of their advisees; 41 returned survey forms sent out to the entire Faculty in the current year.

The discernible features of the Freshman Seminars seem to us to fall into three categories, to each of which we devote a section of the report: academic and non-academic aspects, and the role of the Freshman Seminars in relation to academic advising. The concluding section of the report contains our overall evaluation, and recommendations regarding their continuance.

Freshman Seminars—Academic Aspects

The subjects taught in Freshman Seminars have been extremely diverse. The approaches teachers have taken to their subject-matter have varied widely also. The work of many of the seminars has quite evidently centered around efforts to determine the meaning of the student of intellectual activity, an academic pursuit or a problem of knowledge. Such seminars might be said to have been very much oriented toward the student's "self." But by no means an overwhelming proportion have been so oriented, and the character of others seems to range all the way to courses that appear very much like usual departmental offerings. The orientation of the seminars cannot be accurately determined simply from their titles and descriptions; since the most explicit attention to the student's learning experience might come in seminars the most traditionally described.

That such diversity exists can be attributed in part at least to the loose definition of the seminars which now can only be derived from a variety of committee reports, faculty decisions, and from administration statements aimed at making the program attractive to students. In consequence some faculty are dissuaded from teaching the seminars because of the seeming exorbitant demands implied by the overblown rhetoric in the catalog and in the present descriptions given to students. Student expectations are sometimes too high—leading to unnecessary distress. And faculty wishing to join the program find real difficulty deciding what sorts of courses will serve as suitable seminars. The difficulty of the problem is exemplified by some seminars whose teachers do not advise, by some seminars without a student assistant, and by the fact that the CEP has never explained to the faculty upon what basis it determines what seminars it accepts and what seminars it rejects.

The diversity of the content of the seminars is revealing in another important respect. It must of course be recognized that there are a good number of faculty who simply do not want to teach Freshman Seminars, and see as more important their work in their fields of specialization. But for some faculty members, the seminars provide an opportunity they would not otherwise have to teach outside their departments, and to teach sorts of

courses they could not otherwise teach. While some few of the subjects offered in the Freshman Seminars *could* have appeared as departmental offerings, most could not; hence it seems fair to conclude that the seminar program has a potentially liberating effect for such faculty as wish to use it to offer a subject not directly tied to their specialties. And it certainly is true that most of the seminar subjects would not appear in the Amherst curriculum were the Freshman Seminar program not in existence.

The freedom of faculty to teach the Freshman Seminars of course varies greatly from department to department, depending upon faculty commitments. But the list of those who have taught them makes clear that the program has not depended only on a few departments, nor that it has drawn primarily upon either senior or junior faculty.*

Some note should be made of the cost of faculty energy involved in the Freshman Seminars. Many who teach them believe they are more demanding of time and effort than their other courses.

Efforts to increase collegiality among groups teaching the seminars in ways reminiscent of the relationships involved in required courses under earlier curricula have had little success, probably because of the lack of a common enterprise.

Our final concern under this head is the pedagogical aspect of the seminars. We believe we can confidently say that many seminars *have* involved experimentation in teaching (though the experimentation was not particularly radical); that for many faculty it was a novel and illuminating and useful experience to teach with a student assistant; that for many faculty there was excitement and benefit to class morale in allowing the students to have some control (the degree varied greatly) of the syllabus. There were difficulties too, arising from just the same situation, experiments that didn't work, students who wouldn't take control of their own education, etc. And as a result, after experiments

*So far 75 Freshman Seminars have been taught, by 59 persons. Of those persons offering seminars, 54 were regular members of the faculty (29 senior, 25 junior, at the time the seminar was offered), 2 emeriti, and 3 whose principal identification is in administration. Of the 25 junior faculty who taught seminars 11 have been denied tenure or reappointment (two of whom taught more than one seminar).

failed, in some cases conservatism set in again. We do not pretend to be able to assess the balance in a sufficiently objective way to determine the seminars' value in some final educational sense. We can only say they have provided a place in the curriculum where such variety and experimentation is evidently encouraged.

Freshman Seminars—Non-Academic Aspects

The most obvious way in which Freshman Seminars differ from other courses at the College is that all students in the class are freshmen. A majority of the Resident Advisors commented on this as an important positive aspect of the seminars. The first semester at college is a difficult period of adjustment. The College has taken cognizance of this fact by creating courses which are especially for freshmen. Classmates are peers undergoing a common experience. The seminars are in some cases perceived as a "support group" which provides a forum for academic and personal adjustment. Students feel less anonymous because they are in a class small enough for the professor to know who they are. They are most likely to speak in class because they are free from the intimidating presence of upperclassmen. One student commented that friendships form more readily in a Freshman Seminar than in other classes. Another reported a strong sense of group identity and said, "We enjoy talking to each other in class or out."

Some of the teachers of Freshman Seminars state in their evaluation reports that some class time was devoted to explicit discussion of the transition from high school to college and/or an orientation to the aims of a liberal education. It is not clear whether comments of the type summarized in the preceding paragraph come exclusively from students who were in seminars where such explicit discussion took place. It seems likely that this is not the case, for it is probably a minority of the seminars which operated in this way. The idea that Freshman Seminars might be used for "orientation" dates back to early committee reports and the motion which was defeated on December 7, 1971. The motion voted by the Faculty on March 14, 1972, makes no reference to "orientation" as a specific aim of the seminars.

Those teachers who chose to run their seminars in this way were at liberty to do so since the catalog description of Freshman Seminars states that "these courses share a common purpose and a common style," and it might reasonably be assumed by one who has read the earlier committee reports that "orientation" is part of the common purpose. Those who did not include "orientation" as part of their seminars were not subverting the purpose of the seminars, for this concept has no official status. In fact, there is no reason that faculty members who were not present for the discussions in 1971–72 should think of including "orientation" as part of a seminar.

Early committee reports on the concept of Freshman Seminars stated that one of the central purposes should be to pursue whatever subject matter is being discussed to the level of its personal implications for the students of the seminar. This goal may or may not be considered to be embodied in the following language which is part of the motion voted on March 14, 1972: "Emphasis will fall as much upon questions concerning the value and responsibility of knowing as upon a specific subject or discipline." In his report as Coordinator in 1973, Professor Flory states, "The seminars have also confirmed, I believe, the appropriateness of what has become the standard style of seminar topic: the 'How do I relate academic problem Y to me?' format. The most successful seminars seem to have taken a 'big' question or idea and made it intimate and personal through studying some specific texts in the light of the experience of belief of the individual student. . . ." Examination of the titles of the seminars offered over the entire four-year period suggests that a majority are aimed to a certain extent at "personal implications." From the evaluation reports of the teachers it can be seen that practice has varied between wide extremes. At one extreme are those seminars characterized by the teachers themselves as focusing on "the meaning of life," "the conception of self," or the question "Why are we here?" Several of the professors who operated in this way have said they were not pleased with the results and they would not attempt the same thing again. At the other extreme there are a number of seminars that appear to be concerned only with the inculcation of a particular body of knowl-

edge. The teachers' evaluation reports give no indication that an attempt was made to discuss personal feelings or to relate the subject matter to the experience of the individual student. A number of the senior assistants were quite frank in their reports in stating that they were disappointed that their particular seminar was too subject-oriented, that there was not enough discussion, or that the discussion was dominated by the two teachers and the freshmen were not allowed to enter in.

The question of the worth of the "personal implications" aspect is controversial. There are some who would say that relating the subject matter to the life of the individual student is the essence of all good teaching: Freshman Seminars should make no special claims in this regard. There are others who would say it is unseemly to become "intimate and personal" in a classroom discussion; no course within the curriculum should appear to encourage such an indulgence. Seminar leaders have used different techniques to reach the level of personal implications. Quite a few have asked for student autobiographies or journals. For some the operative phrase is the sentence which appears in the catalog description: "What matters is the quality of talk, sustained by qualities of mind." One professor stated his disgust at having allowed the seminar to become a bullsession; another stated his belief that there is educational value in a high-level bullsession involving freshmen, a senior and a faculty member.

A number of the Resident Advisors mentioned smallness of class-size as a positive morale factor. The common fare for freshmen consists of introductory courses, which tend to be large lecture courses. Many students choose to come to a small liberal arts college because they expect to have "contact with the professors," and are disappointed if this does not occur in the freshman year. The "social" aspect of Freshman Seminars was also mentioned frequently—e.g., informal meetings over lunch, or a party at the faculty member's home. Something implicit in the nature of a Freshman Seminar seems to encourage faculty members to make a special effort to get to know the students well. Students are appreciative of this expression of "concern and humanness on the instructor's part," and it gives them a feeling of belonging at Amherst College.

Professor Lois Beck says in her report as Coordinator of the Freshman Seminars in 1974 that many of the teachers expressed "frustration concerning the aims and intentions of freshman seminars. Are they to deal with intellectual development, introduction to the Amherst curriculum and a liberal education, development of student-teacher relationships conducive to advising, socialization to the Amherst environment, creation of a trauma-free setting in what is otherwise a difficult *rite de passage* for new students, answers to 'life' and 'self' inquiries, or any combination of these?"

Many seminars have carried out what has been referred to as "an affective function which creates a stronger relationship between teacher and student." That others have not done so is not surprising, since there are no guidelines available to new teachers who want to know the range of possibilities as to what they might do with a Freshman Seminar.

Freshman Seminars and Advising

Common opinion on the campus is that the Freshman Seminars have been notably successful in their function as part of the academic advising process. Our inquiries have tended to support this opinion, but it is important to understand just what is meant by this "success." Very few faculty and almost no students testified to their being much connection between what went on *academically* in the seminars and the advising process. In other words, few participants testified that the students' choice of courses, programs, majors, was influenced by the discussions in the seminars themselves where presumably there was an opportunity to raise questions about education, the liberal arts, the nature of inquiry and so on. If indeed students later chose their courses more wisely, or understood better their reasons for choosing them, none chose to say that this was a result of the academic discussions within the seminars themselves. Other than by simple testimony, it is difficult to know how else this possibility might be explored. Statistics from Professor Grose provide little enlightment in this area. He concludes there is "no discernible difference [in pattern of dispersion of course elections] between those who take FS and those who do not." Pro-

fessor Grose's other figures show that a larger percentage of students who later majored in Social or Natural Sciences took Freshman Seminars than of those who later majored in Humanities: 66 percent of Div. II; 62 percent of Div. III; but 46 percent of Div. I, took a seminar. Among Pre-Meds, 48 percent took a seminar; among Pre-Law 42 percent. (The percent of the whole sample taking FS was 54 percent.) The percentage of students taking *no* math or science course at Amherst before graduation was virtually identical between the two categories. (A larger number of those not taking seminars did take a math or science course elsewhere, but the number of students comprising these percentages is too small to be significant.)

With a few rather special exceptions, however, students and teachers expressed considerable satisfaction with the advising process adjunctive to the Freshman Seminars. Most faculty said it was considerably more satisfying than advising non-majors under other circumstances. Students said they felt *recognized* by their advisor; faculty said they *knew* their advisees better than they usually did. Conversations about academic programs occurred more readily, sometimes more frequently, usually with less inhibition. In many cases students and faculty continued their relation after the student had declared a major. Not all (indeed relatively few) teachers or students saw the advising process as "central" to the Freshman Seminar itself; and there is a range of attitude on both sides about its relative importance to the student's educational experience at the College: to some, the advisor's role in helping students make up their programs was simply not very important. The role of the senior assistant varied considerably from one seminar to another with regard to the advising process; the usual remark, if the matter was mentioned, was that the senior assistant gave more candid and specific assessment of the courses, programs, majors.

Difficult as it is to assess "success' in the advising program, it is notable that neither students nor teachers testified to any negative responses regarding the operation of the advising process through the Freshman Seminars. This can be taken, without cynicism, as a strong endorsement. People seem to *believe* it has worked well and so it is probably fair to say it *has* worked well.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We have one conclusion to offer in direct response to a question you put to us in your charge to this committee. We did not find in our review of the Freshman Seminar program anything new or surprising which we feel it is vital the Select Committee on the Curriculum consider in its efforts to prepare proposals for curricular reform. The seminars have not, in our judgment, brought to light new and exciting curricular ideas which should be noted here.

Yet we do have two recommendations we wish to bring forward:

1) We are persuaded, particularly by reports from students, that the supportive aspect of the seminars is beneficial to first-semester freshmen. The small size of the classes, the fact that the teacher is the student's advisor, that all classmates are also freshmen, such things seem to provide for some students an atmosphere which assists in the adjustment to college life and learning. On the other hand, many students and faculty have made clear they would feel unpleasantly coerced by a requirement of the Freshman Seminars. *Our recommendation is that space be kept in the freshman year for elective Freshman Seminars.* We also recognize that those peculiar benefits of the Freshman Seminars we care especially to see preserved might have to be provided for in other ways if the Faculty were to adopt certain other kinds of provisions for the freshman year.

We add a further suggestion: it does not seem to us necessary that the Freshman Seminar program need continue to be organized as it is at present. We believe that the benefits we see arising from Freshman Seminars could be derived also from courses taught within departments so long as certain minimum requirements were fulfilled: that the maximum enrollment be fifteen; that they all be freshmen; that the teacher be advisor to all the students; and that the faculty member accept responsibility for setting the work of the course into the perspective of general education and the student's personal relation to it. We would hope that the use of a senior assistant would remain an available option (with course credits). We believe under such an arrangement it would be possible to keep open the possibility

for much of the kind of adventurousness and experiment that has arisen under the present program, while getting away from much of its present air of speciality.

2) We also believe something should be done, if Freshman Seminars are retained, to simplify and clarify the way they are described to freshmen and to the Faculty. As noted in the first part of this report, we believe that the windy rhetoric and the hard sell now used to present the program lead to heightened expectations on the part of freshmen, and to discouragement or self-consciousness on the part of faculty. Therefore, *we recommend that a simplified description of the Freshman Seminars* be prepared for use in the catalog, and for summer mailings to entering students. We are of course aware that such a description might facilitate the change suggested in the preceding paragraph.

JOHN CAMERON
PETER GOODING
JOHN HALSTED
DUDLEY TOWNE

November 1, 1976

ALTERNATE PROPOSAL

THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT, undated and virtually untitled, requires a setting in the chronology of the Amherst College curricular debates of 1977. Six faculty meetings in all were principally devoted to proposals from the Select Committee on the Curriculum. After the first two meetings, those of March 8 and March 15, the committee reconvened for a series of four meetings, seeking ways of responding to the principal objections to its original report. The following memorandum with its "Alternate Proposal" was completed on April 5 and reached the faculty on April 8.

At the faculty meeting of April 12, debate focused on comparisons between the original report and the Alternate Proposal, although some faculty members clearly wanted neither. By the meeting of April 19, three variant plans submitted by individual faculty members were also in the hands of the faculty. That meeting concluded with a straw vote on Motion III of the original report, on which debate had largely centered. The motion was defeated 28–60–2. The Alternate Proposal fared little better in a straw vote taken at the end of discussion on April 26, when it was defeated 39–55–1. It was then decided that a mailed, nonbinding ballot would be sent to the faculty, allowing them to rank the various curricular options before them: the plan in the original report, the Alternate, three proposals by individual faculty members, and the status quo. The ballot also allowed for a vote of "acceptable" or "unacceptable" on various numbers of ILS courses (zero through four), various distribution mechanisms, the Adjunct Program, the committee's recommended advising system, and the existing advising system. The results of the ballot were hard to interpret. Some saw hope for a compromise. Others suspected that the faculty was hopelessly divided.

At the sixth meeting on the curriculum (May 10), proceeding

as the committee of the whole, the faculty took up in sequence the ILS courses, the Adjunct Program, distribution, and the advisory system. On the initial straw vote, the plan for two ILS courses as described in the Alternate Proposal failed, but the subsequent votes against one and three ILS courses were considerably larger. With agreement to reconsider, the two-ILS plan then passed in a straw vote, 59–35–4. Consideration of the other issues followed, with the faculty supporting non-required distribution as presented in the Alternate, and the proposals of the original report regarding the Adjunct Program and advising, which earlier debate had suggested were not very controversial. Resuming normal parliamentary order, the faculty voted the following summary motion 66–29:

> *That the Faculty adopt two ILS courses, the adjunct program, an advisory pattern of distribution as described in the Alternate Proposal of the Select Committee, and the advisory system recommended in the Select Committee's Report.*

It was understood that these proposals would be implemented in the fall of 1978, with 1977–78 to be a year of preparation.

Alternate Proposal: The Freshman Year Introduction to Liberal Studies *

The freshman year is a significant period in the life of any college student and it is, or should be, equally significant for their teachers. For students, that first year is a time for confronting—or perhaps (in ways that will thereafter prove damaging) failing to confront—the meaning of college education itself. In the relative freedom of this transitional moment, with the concerns of high school behind them and a full immersion in the self-justifying duties of daily college life yet to come, students are uniquely well-situated to look about them and to wonder about what larger implications their education might have. The very things that make their position marginal and the routine of the College alien to them also make it possible for them to ask

*Adopted 1977

penetrating and fundamental questions about the nature of our enterprise and their place in it, the kind of questions which left suppressed could lead to cynicism later on. What have they taken upon themselves in coming to a small, liberal arts school? What is expected of them, what in turn should they expect, and why?

The need to respond to such questions and to introduce freshmen to the life of the College presents faculty with an opportunity and a challenge that is just as great as that facing entering students. What is it, after all, that the faculty mean to do: what common enterprise engages them as "liberal educators," why does this enterprise matter, and how does it matter? Teachers of freshmen are called upon to seek again, as much for themselves as for their students, the deeper reasons and purposes that give rise to intellectual activity in general and to the particular ways of organizing that activity at Amherst.

Accordingly we propose to set aside a part of the freshman year—two courses out of the total eight—for a program designed to help entering students see more deeply into what is essential to the life of the College, to confront it as first and foremost a place of liberal learning—and only after that, a place for majoring and earning certification. The courses in this introductory program will lie outside divisions, departments, and majors, a separation emphasizing the special place which these courses occupy in the career of each entering student and in the general curriculum of the College. The subject matter of the courses will vary, reflecting the concerns of the groups of (typically three to five) faculty members who have gathered together to devise them. Ideally the faculty for each course will be drawn from different segments of the College, even from departments that normally seem widely separated by differences of method and training. The crossing of departmental boundaries will be another way of demonstrating the priority of a common enterprise that embraces the college's curricular diversities. The teachers of these courses will come together as members of a larger college community that transcends and contains their individual departments and programs. They will come less as "generalists" than as specialists who see themselves responsible, even in their specializations, to the integrity of liberal learning, as experts who are con-

cerned to define and "place" themselves, their particular activities and interests, in relation to each other and to the curriculum of the College as a whole. (It is, after all, only the conviction that some common enterprise does exist, and that it is worth defining and preserving, that distinguishes a small, liberal arts college like Amherst and makes it viable.)

In the proposed liberal studies program, then, faculty will join together to pursue subjects that engage them, subjects which they would perhaps be unable to teach alone or which they might not easily teach as part of their regular work for a department or a program. The differences in training and skill that the individual designers of each course bring to it will alternately supplement and challenge the other members of the group. Each course will thus become a forum where students will be able to observe, compare, and try out distinct intellectual styles, a setting where such distinctions will emerge naturally and meaningfully. That is, differences of approach will come out in the act of pursuing a subject; students will learn about these differences "where they count" and see why they count. Such students will have a chance to become better acquainted with the diversity of intellectual life at the College. Moreover, taking two such introductory courses—one each semester, with the choice of a second course therefore subject to an advisor's consent—will make the range of exposure even broader. They will see more teachers than freshmen do now, and more various teachers, and they will gain a richer sense of the characteristic approaches and interests available to them at the College. The result can be to challenge our students at the start of their college experience to re-examine their educational commitments. The liberal studies program should make their future elections more rational, less subject to accident, ignorance, or prejudice.

But this is really a secondary goal. The primary goal of the liberal studies program is to embody for all the members of the college community, be they faculty or entering students, the nature of our shared life and what we mean by "liberal" education. That is, not mastery of a subject or expertise within a limited horizon of prefabricated questions and answers, but a readiness of apprehension, an openness to new experience, a capacity to

be critical of one's own assumptions and attitudes. For liberal education means, at root, the freeing of the mind from blind adherence, from dogmatic and unexamined narrowness of view. It means as well, and simultaneously, the freedom to explore the world from other points of view. In bringing together faculty and students for the liberal studies program, it is this kind of "liberation" that we hope to effect.

Summary

1. The liberal studies program will consist of a group of non-departmental courses, none of which may count toward a major.
   a. Each freshman will take two ILS courses, one each semester.
   b. The second semester ILS selection will be subject to an advisor's consent, and the advisor will insist that the student take a course significantly different in its subject matter, range of approaches, and participating faculty, from the one taken during the first semester.
2. Each Introduction to Liberal Studies course will be designed by a group of (on the average) three to five faculty members.
   a. The subject of the course will be left up to the designers of the course.
   b. Teachers will generally come from different departments, and will use their differences to assist and question each other in constructing a course that transcends departmental rubrics.
   c. The courses are to introduce liberal learning and not particular programs of study.
   d. The arrangements for sectioning and teaching the courses will be left up to the faculty who design the course, with the recommendation that an effort be made to meet with students in small groups and to allow each student the opportunity to encounter a number of the faculty responsible for the course.
   e. An auxiliary committee of the CEP (see original report, p.

52) will oversee the program and measure proposed courses against these criteria.

f. Sample courses (culled from faculty discussions): The city; Conceptions of time in literature and modern physics; Evolution; The history of love; When does a theory fail?; etc.

In view of the seriously curtailed "distribution" which this alternative plan for the freshman year entails, we offer a further proposal.

A list of "desirable areas of distribution" will appear in the Amherst College Catalog. The areas named will not be tied to specific courses or departments, but instead represent importantly different kinds of experience available to students at the College, experiences that can be achieved in a variety of ways. While such distribution would not be required, it would be strongly recommended and would serve as a frame for advisor and student to discuss the choice of free electives on grounds other than time and work demands. A provisional list of the recommended areas might include:

knowledge of a culture other than one's own;
knowledge of a language other than one's own;
knowledge of human experience in a period before one's own lifetime;
analysis of one's own polity, economic order, and culture;
engaging in abstract reasoning;
working within the scientific method;
interpreting, evaluating, exploring the life of the imagination.

A tentative draft of language for the Catalog follows:

> Advisors do more than assist students in shaping their adjunct programs and their majors. Among their duties is cooperation in purposeful course selection to broaden each student's range of intellectual experience. As student and advisor together plan the student's program, they should discuss whether the student has selected courses that offer encounters with or experience in, the following areas . . . (See provisional list, above).

THE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE, 1937–39

Reports and Related Documents

ALTHOUGH OVERSHADOWED by the "New Curriculum" adopted in 1945, the curricular changes instituted by the Amherst College faculty from 1938 to 1940 were among the most important in the College's history. The standing Curriculum Committee had disappeared in 1932, when President Stanley King took office and arranged for aboliton of fourteen faculty committees and concentration of their activities in a single "Committee of Six." This body was to be the executive committee of the faculty and an advisory council to the president.

But on March 23, 1937, on recommendation of the Committee of Six, the faculty voted to establish a Curriculum Committee "to consider suggestions from the faculty on all matters relating to the educational policy of the college, courses, majors, honors etc., whether they be general or particular." [1] The three members, with staggered terms, were to be named by the Committee of Six. On April 14, 1937, the following were appointed: Otto Glaser of the biology department for a three-year term, Theodore Baird of English for two years, and Charles W. Cole of economics for one year. Professor Cole was replaced in 1938 by George Rogers Taylor, also of the economics department, Professor Baird in 1939 by King Turgeon of the French department. Professor Glaser was chairman until he went on sabbatic leave for the second semester, 1939–40.

According to its original mandate, the new committee was to report three times a year to the Committee of Six. Some reports,

1. Quotations and explanatory information in these introductory notes are drawn chiefly from the Faculty Minutes and Minutes of the Committee of Six, Registrar's Office, Amherst College. Originals of the documents themselves are in the Amherst College Archives, Robert Frost Library.

however, were informally given by the chairman, and only the more important were duplicated and forwarded to the faculty. These reports succeeded in stimulating general discussion of the curriculum. Three letters from colleagues are presented below. Trustees joined in the exploration of educational ideas, and in February 1940, the committee reported that it was meeting for talks with a recently-formed "Committee of Seven," made up of students.

Professor Baird being on leave at the time, Professors Glaser and Cole drew up a questionnaire in April 1937, which went to all faculty colleagues. Professor Glaser's notes for an informal report made in November 1937, revealed that although all respondents believed Amherst must provide "Liberal" education, their definitions included "every shade of opinion." There was, however, a shared impression that the present curriculum was disorganized—"not necessarily from [the] point of view of individual departments though this may also be true; but disorganized as a whole." As a biologist, Glaser rejected the interpretation that saw disorganization as a sign of vitality.[2]

The committee reported itself as favoring "proposals which attempt to break down the usual departmental barriers and to establish new and larger relationships of knowledge," and particularly recommended "the introduction, in the senior year, of an occasional course in which two or more members of the Faculty, preferably in different departments, will cooperate." Although Renaissance Studies was soon added as a "group" major (an American Studies major having been approved in March 1937) and room was allowed for majors to include courses in "related fields," the reforms of the next two years tended on the whole to strengthen departmental identities.

Although Professor Glaser made "a report of progress" at the faculty meeting of November 16, 1937, the document printed below appears to be the first formal written report of the new Curriculum Committee. Its proposals for enlarging and enhanc-

2. Marginal notes, Otto C. Glaser to Stanley King, October 16, 1937, Amherst College Archives.

ing the major and identifying "advanced courses" were adopted by the faculty on January 25, 1938, as was the plan for a Reading Period, which the faculty liberalized to include sophomores. The last two sections, though not representing broad curricular questions, are included here to suggest that the committee concerned itself, as its mandate directed, with both the general and the particular.

AMHERST COLLEGE
Curriculum Committee*

SECTION I

Report on Majors, Part I

Among the things indicated by the results of the questionnaire sent out by the curriculum committee last spring was evidence of a fairly general belief that the present requirements for a major in Amherst are insufficient.

For example, a member of the French department suggested that we revert to the old system of two majors of three courses each. A member of the music department urged that "at least four courses for a major" be required. "Major requirements are too easy," declared a member of the economics department. "Sequences or majors should amount to more," was the opinion of a member of the Greek department. A member of the history department thought that more concentration was essential and that a major should consist of "at least five courses in the last two years." One faculty member who did not give his departmental connection said, "the major should be more than just three courses in a department." Another wished the curriculum committee to suggest some way to make it impossible for a major to consist of survey courses only. A member of the chemistry department re-submitted a plan for group majors, prepared by that department a few years ago, under which a student would do one fourth or more of his work in a single department and another fourth in closely related fields.

*Report submitted January 6, 1938

In the light of these proposals and suggestions the curriculum committee has made a study of the requirements for a major at Amherst. The requirement is at present very simple:

> A major consists of three-year courses in the same subject pursued either (1) during three consecutive years, or (2) during the junior and senior years. A major must be completed in the senior year, and, therefore, it may not be begun until after the freshman year. The senior year course must be one considered by the department to be of advanced character.
>
> Every student is expected to consult a member of the department in which he proposes to take his major course in regard to his plan of work in college.

The purpose of the major requirement is to prevent undue dispersion of the student's energies, to provide for a certain degree of concentration, and to ensure some slight mastery on the part of the student of at least one field of study. The same purpose is served by the sequence requirement,[3] but not very effectively, since it was designed to accompany a change to a schedule of four courses a year. With five courses a year, the student finds the sequence requirement so easy to fulfill that it has little effect on his choice of subjects.

That the major requirement achieves its end to some extent is probable but whether to a sufficienct extent is open to question. It is, like the sequence requirement, so easy to meet that there was, this fall, the classic case of a student who was majoring in English but did not know it. Usually, the student is at least aware of his major. Frequently, the department is not. An informal inquiry showed that most departments had no list of their major students, and often had no notion of who they were, or even how many they were.

It is clear that with the three course requirement a student may major in a subject without acquiring any real mastery of it. Even though his senior course is to be "advanced" it may be one which is open to adequately prepared freshmen or sophomores. In a department with a large offering, the student may complete

3. Candidates for the B.A. were required "in each of sophomore, junior, and senior years [to] elect two courses in two subjects in which courses were taken in the preceding year" (*Amherst College Catalogue* for 1937–38, p. 33).

a legal major without taking any courses not of a survey, general, or elementary nature. The ideal curriculum for a student in a liberal college would probably provide for enough diversity to give him some background in a number of fields and for enough concentration to make him relatively well informed in at least one field. The question, then, is how much concentration is desirable? Are three courses, or 15% of a student's college work, sufficient? Would more than that endanger a proper diversification of his studies?

A brief survey of the major requirements in other colleges may be of interest at this point. It does not give any clear guidance since, after all, they are different institutions. But it does, perhaps, offer some standards for comparison. In many colleges, the major requirements are so complicated that two or three pages are necessary to set them forth in condensed form. (It is, parenthetically, to be hoped that Amherst will retain the virtue of simplicity.) But they can be summed up in a crude way by indicating the proportion of a student's undergraduate work that must be in or around his major field. In general, the percentages are minimums, and they are in some places subject to various complex exceptions. Roughly, however, they run something like this:

Harvard—37½%
Yale—30%
Wesleyan—27%
Dartmouth—21%
Mount Holyoke—40%
Princeton—39%
Williams—32%
Swarthmore—25% plus 19% in a minor
Smith—25%

In addition to the courses many of these colleges require extra work in the way of papers, reading, or examinations in the major field. These colleges were not selected because of high major requirements but were chosen, rather, because they seemed to form a fair sample of the best educational institutions of the East. The only one studied that does not appear on the list is Hamilton where the requirement is for two majors of three courses each. It is possible that there is a certain disadvantage for Amherst graduates in the fact that a statement from them that they have majored in a subject means so much less than a similar statement

from graduates of comparable institutions.

The curriculum committee believes that, without making any drastic alterations in the form or manner of majoring at Amherst it would be wise to raise the requirement, while keeping it simple and flexible. Thus more concentration and more mastery of a single field would be demanded of the students. The possibility that a student might graduate with nothing behind him save elementary or survey courses would be reduced. Further, the committee holds that a somewhat closer relationship between the student and the department in which he is majoring is advisable. It, therefore, proposes that the following major requirement be a substitute for the present one:

> A major shall consist of five full courses taken under the direction of a department or special group. At least three of these five courses shall be in the department or group; one or two may be in related fields. A major shall be begun by the junior year; it shall be completed in the senior year; and it shall be pursued without interruption, i. e., no year without a course in the major shall intervene between the beginning of the major and its end. At least one of the major courses taken in senior year shall be a course that the department or group counts advanced.
>
> Every student shall give written notice before the beginning of his junior year to the department or group in which he plans to major, and his election of major courses shall be subject to the formal approval of the department or group.

This change might be made effective for the class of 1940 without injustice, if exceptions were permitted in that class, in specially difficult cases.

Report on Majors, Part II.

Whether or not the proposed modification of the major requirement is adopted by the faculty, the curriculum committee strongly recommends that each department should formally decide which courses are to be termed "advanced" in the sense that they are suitable as culminating courses for seniors majoring in that department. Such courses should then receive special designation in the catalog.

As a criterion for determining whether or not a course is "advanced" in this special sense, the committee suggests that such

courses should not be open to underclassmen and should possess one or more of the following characteristics:

(1) Small size.
(2) A large amount of individual instruction and close cooperation between the student and the instructor.
(3) Emphasis on individual work by the students in the form of special readings, reports, papers, research, or experiments.

SECTION II

A Proposed Plan for a Reading Period at Amherst College

1. Beginning with the school year 1938–1939, those instructors who so elect may adopt a reading period in any of their courses open only to juniors and seniors. During the reading period, regular class meetings shall be suspended in those courses to which the system applies.

2. Instructors desiring to adopt the reading period shall notify the secretary of the faculty by April 1 as to which of their courses will have a reading period. The announcement of courses shall designate those which have a reading period.

3. There shall be two reading periods of approximately two weeks each. The first shall come immediately before the first semester examinations and the second immediately before the final examinations. The exact scheduling of the periods shall be the duty of the administration of the college.

4. The type of work to be done by the students during the reading period shall be determined by the instructor.

5. Unless exception is made by the college administration, it is expected that both students and instructors will remain in residence during the reading period.

6. The system shall be entirely optional and shall be regarded as experimental. It is recommended that after this plan has been tried for two years a special study be made to determine whether the results justify its continuation.

SECTION III

Proposed Courses in Philosophy

Philosophy 1. Introduction to Philosophical Literature. Pro-

fessor Lamprecht. A study of certain great books in the literature of philosophy. For 1938–1939 the books selected for study include Plato's *Republic*, Lucretius's *De Rerum Natura*, Hobbes's *Leviathan*, and Hume's *Enquiry concerning Human Understanding*. Elective for Sophomores only. (To be given every year beginning with 1938–1939)

Philosophy 4. History of Philosophy. Professor Lamprecht. A survey of European philosophy from the early Greeks to the nineteenth century. Assigned readings from the sources. Courses 4 and 6 are given in alternate years. Elective for Juniors. (To be given in 1938–1939)

Philosophy 5. English Philosophy. Professor Kennedy. The history of ideas in England from the beginning of the seventeenth century to the present. Writings of the most important philosophers will be studied in relation to the economic and social conditions under which they were produced. Courses 3 and 5 will be given in alternate years. Elective for Juniors. (To be given in 1938–1939)

Philosophy 6. Philosophy of Religion. Professor Lamprecht. A study of religion in its historical development and in its philosophical expression. The historical part of the course will consider primitive religion, Judaism, Greek religion, and Christianity. The philosophical part will consider the discussion of religion by such men as James, Santayana, Bergson, von Hugel, and Whitehead. Courses 6 and the new 4 are to be given in alternate years. Elective for Juniors. (To be given in 1938–1939)

Philosophy 9. Problems of Philosophy. Professor Lamprecht. Each student will pursue individual study of a problem which he may select in conference with the instructor in the course, and will prepare an essay in which he presents the results of his year's study. Special work in the field of Renaissance philosophy will be assigned to a student majoring in Renaissance Studies. A grade of B in one prior course in philosophy, requisite. Elective for Seniors. (To be given in 1939–1940)

SECTION IV

Tentative Program of Fine Arts Courses (For 1938–39 only)

Fine Arts 1. An Historical Survey of the Development of Architecture, Sculpture, and Painting. Professor Morgan. Elective for Sophomores.

Fine Arts 3. Greek Art. Professor Morgan. Requisite: Fine Arts 1 (Elective for Seniors)

Fine Arts 4. Theory and Technique. Professor Scott. Elective for Sophomores, with the permission of the instructor.

Fine Arts 5. Italian Renaissance Art. Requisite: Fine Arts 1 (Elective for Seniors)

a. Florentine and Umbrian Art. 1st half year. Professor Morgan.
b. Venetian and North Italian Art. 2nd half year. Professor Scott.

The longest and most theoretical of the committee's reports, the following document was read on November 10, 1938 to the Committee of Six, which directed that it be distributed to the faculty with a call for suggestions. The striking scientific analogies and other internal evidence identify Otto Glaser as the principal author. The disagreement of Glaser and Baird recorded in Section III is an unusually direct confrontation between the scientific-naturalist and the humanist perspectives.

AMHERST COLLEGE
Amherst, Massachusetts

November 16, 1938

Dear Colleague:

In accepting the general report of the Curriculum Committee for the year 1937-38, the Committee of Six voted to

send this report to every member of the faculty and to ask members of the faculty to send comments or suggestions in writing to the Chairman of the Curriculum Committee. The Committee of Six also asked the President of the Faculty Club to hold an informal meeting at the Faculty Club to discuss this report.

The Curriculum Committee suggests that the faculty consider the following questions:

1. Does it appear likely that anything could be gained from closer interplay between the Curriculum Committee of the Faculty and the Instruction Committee of the Trustees?

2. Does the Faculty see any advantages in encouraging the formation of a permanent undergraduate committee on the curriculum?

3. Provided a version suitable to our conditions could be found, would the Faculty contemplate the introduction of the English system of pass-men?

4. While it is hoped the Faculty may express its opinions freely on any other matters suggested by the report, criticisms or amendments of Section III are especially desirable. If these were put in writing, the Curriculum Committee would study them at leisure.

5. Does the interpretation of recent legislation (Section IV) require any changes?

I would suggest that the contents of this report should not be discussed with any member of the student body until this report has been acted upon by the faculty.

Sincerely,
Otto Glaser

GENERAL REPORT OF THE CURRICULUM COMMITTEE

For the year 1937–38

Including a Footnote
by
Professor Baird

Submitted to the Committee of Six
November 10th, 1938

I.
HISTORICAL FOREGROUND.

In the spring of 1937 the Faculty authorized its Executive Committee to appoint and set into operation a permanent committee 'to watch the curriculum'; to concern itself with 'all matters pertaining to educational policies'; and to report to the Faculty at least once each term of the academic year. Of the first appointees, Professor Glaser, Chairman, was to serve three years; Professor Baird, two; and Professor Cole, one year. No member being immediately eligible for re-appointment, Professor Taylor succeeded Professor Cole at the end of the first year. Professor Taylor's term is three years. As all important proposals, whether arising from the floor of the Faculty Meeting or not, are normally presented for Faculty action by the Committee of Six, the Curriculum Committee in all instances reports first to its parent Committee. Under this arrangement three types of reports have been made:

1. Those forwarded to the Faculty by the Committee of Six;
2. Those withheld by the Committee of Six, pending further investigation; and,
3. Those relating to problems immediately in the path of the President.

The Secretary of the faculty has been most helpful in making our reports available to the Committee of Six and, at times, directly to the Faculty. Other clerical expenses, especially those connected with the accumulation of data to be analysed were, defrayed from a small budget made available by President King.

II.
GENERAL COSMOLOGY OF AMHERST

A. Structure of the System.

The Curriculum Committee of 1937 is the first of its kind after an interval of six years. Endowed with the goodwill of the Faculty, the advantages of discontinuity, and ignorance, we were fully equipped to consider 'all matters pertaining to educational policies'. But 'all' is the largest word in our vocabulary and coextensive with the universe. Inevitably as we scanned the heavens for signs, we became aware of firmament on firmament. Modestly identifying ourselves with the lowest order of being there began to revolve about us, generating ever widening spheres, a Committee of Six, a Faculty, Students, Alumni and Trustees. The harmony of this system is propagated through an all-pervasive ether with Deans, Librarians, Custodians, Treasurers, Comptrollers, Superintendants, Secretaries and certain varieties of Cosmic Dust in ecstatic vibration, but in last analysis the music of the spheres is due chiefly to the indescribable properties of a presidential cometary orbit. It is never less than tangential to all spheres and particles, affects the squares of the distances among them and may extend to the danger spots and pots of gold now and again present in extra-celestial space. Miracles are familiar enough to academic Cosmologists, but this one is transcendent.

B. The Statutes and the Trustees.

The Faculty may legislate within its own sphere, but is subject to a higher law. The exact nature and origin of this are known only in the highest order of being, yet its effects may register in the curriculum. In his last report to the Trustees (Oct. 1, 1938) the President writes: "The Trustees of Amherst long ago delegated to the Faculty the responsibility for educational policy except for certain powers reserved to the Trustees themselves." In so far as they are declared, these reservations have to do with the powers of appointment and review. Obviously both may affect the curriculum. Furthermore the Trustees reserve to themselves specifically "the power of developing the educational opportunities of the college by uniting or dividing departments as well as by decreasing or increasing them." No committee of the Faculty is immune to reservations that apply to the Faculty as a whole. Conceivably two long range programs developed independently, one by the joint efforts of the Faculty and its Curriculum Committee, the other by the Trustees, might fail to articulate purely by chance. While an occurrence of this sort may not appear to be imminent, the chances in its favor could be reduced if in matters significant chiefly because of their projection into the future the Curriculum Committee of the Faculty could be brought into correspondence with the Instruction Committee of the Trustees.

C. The Alumni and Donors.

Gifts and bequests to general endowment are problems only because of their usual size and constant scarcity. It is otherwise with gifts for particular purposes. By the nature of things, no alumnus or donor can affect the curriculum directly. All bequests and gifts are made to the Trustees. But human qualities survive even in the celestial realm and the Trustees might find acceptance easier than rejection. Once more we suggest interplay between two committees which though separated by an astronomical distance have certain ends in common. Specifically, if each knew how the other envisages the future, there might emerge a program definitely designed to canalize our gifts. A document of

this type should undergo frequent revisions and by sensitizing donors no less to the advantages of general endowment than to specific needs would free them and the college from dangers now inherent in gifts that represent chiefly the donor's private interests. Gifts of the latter type are always well intended, but not for that reason inevitably a contribution to the symmetry of the curriculum or the general program of the college.

D. The Faculty and the Students

The curriculum is intended for students. What it does to them is important and sooner or later reacts on the curriculum itself. We believe the curriculum is good for students, but the evidence is indirect and inconclusive. The students are temporary and immature. Those best worth listening to are aware of their own limitations and apt to be reticent. The opinions of the more vocal varieties are based on information always incomplete and frequently false. In student editorials and reports on the curriculum we find evidence of genuine interest in education. If some continuity could be developed by a permanent undergraduate committee on the curriculum, student criticism might ultimately achieve respectability. In the meantime we can rely only on the comforting returns from alumni.

Despite these stabilizing circumstances there is also change. Naturally the object that occupies 23.3% of the space available for annual interment in our catalog shows variations only in minor detail. A change of personnel here, of label, phrase or prerequisite there, and we are again ready to show the adoring multitude our masterpiece of literary dehydration. But this is not the curriculum; not the spirit. The bread and wine placed within the monstrance are consecrated by the Faculty. They alone perform the miracle that unites stability with change; they alone can produce a living thing. Patiently during the year we have watched the priesthood intoning the mass. What have we learned?

III.
LIBERAL EDUCATION

Our observations can be summarized as follows:

1. The Faculty remains committed to the ideal of a liberal education; and
2. Is prepared to entertain measures intended to integrate the courses pursued by individual students.

What then is liberal? In this field the sterility of definitions is well-established; and yet we must have a standard. Can we agree that liberal has something to do with freedom? If so, we may be able to agree also that the freedom to be won and the methods of winning it are not identical for all men nor necessarily the same in all ages. Perhaps we can go further. In every age, every man is simultaneously an instrument and an end. This bivalence recognized by Sir Wm. Hamilton seems to afford a basis for intelligible discourse. It is not difficult to understand what 'instrument' means. Every professional school is engaged in fashioning men into instruments and is activated by the belief that such instruments, on the whole, will become a better lot than if the process were left to the individual or to chance. With the same limitations our commitment to liberal education implies the faith that we can fashion men to become better ends.

But what are better ends? From the naturalism of our own creation and age, there is little opportunity to escape.* If this is bad news, we can at least make the best of it. We can still learn something from children. Prompted by instincts, they achieve first the essential orientations in space, somewhat in time, language, and human relations. After this every child sound in health and nurture enters a period of relentless questioning. Some children never get beyond this stage; they want to know and keep on wanting until the answers yield acceptable minima of satisfaction. This comes whenever a new experience links with earlier ones to form the larger complex where it 'belongs' and in connection with which it 'makes sense'. Assimilated with things accepted long ago and safe to live with, the new loses something of potential danger and mystery. Minds differ in originality yet in the least original some associations of this type are tentative and, as others develop, individual items shift from one cluster to another. In the best minds of all, the unit of reassocia-

* See *Footnote* at end of section.

tion is not the individual item but the complex. Whether the denominations are large or small the principle remains the same. Every new and relatively stable linkage increases insight. By the very act of association whole and part gain significance. Thus the known world grows with knowing and with every act in which the knowing has objective reference come relief, pleasure and satisfaction.

Educational theorists too often resent the processes of nature, and so discard their only allies. Relief, pleasure and satisfaction—are these respectable companions along the road to wisdom? Until the Curriculum Committee has fixed the entrance requirements to another world we must reckon with the enjoyments of this one. And if this leads to intellectual hedonism, mundane in type, we can only say the association is natural and hallowed by the greatest of all hedonists—the scholar driven by his passion.

What has this to do with liberal education? Unable to discuss more than one thing at a time, we may seem to be splitting dollar bills midway between their upper and lower surfaces and entertaining hopes shared only by lunatics. In the world outside the asylum we find no such thing as instrument or end, but always instrument *and* end. Neither is abstract or absolute. The fact that either contributes anything of value emerges only from the constant interplay between the two. If the happiness of man is a natural end and desirable and depends on his perfection as an instrument, the proficient instrument in turn is tempered by the elations and wisdom that come with insights unconfined and understanding.

FOOTNOTE: With this section in general and this sentence in particular I completely disagree. Here is the only interesting point of difference in all our discussion. It is for me a matter of faith that Amherst College exists to combat (not escape, least of all accept) the naturalism of our own creation and age. I also believe that human beings are unlike all other creations of nature in their intelligence. This faith, which I know is central to the teaching of some of my colleagues, I had supposed was commonly shared by the Faculty. Furthermore, I believe that there is certain experience which is peculiarly human, and that it is knowledge of this experience which is called liberal, as belonging to a free man. This faith enables us to make estimates of what is relevant to humanity in some other terms than contemporaneity or proximity or mass or energy or material profits. I had supposed that it is this common faith in human values which distin-

IV.
RECENT LEGISLATION

This excursion into a realm where every step is hazardous was undertaken, not to impose a philosophy of liberal education, but to disclose the road along which we are travelling. Perhaps our parents and grandparents will not approve. The best way to find out is to serenade them with our lyrics and brazenly wait to be shouted down. But there are other reasons for our attempt. Without committing the Faculty to any of the views expressed, we ourselves should like to know the general sense of recent legislation.

A. The Curriculum Committee

We begin with our own birth certificate. It is a document attesting the general goodness of man. It is perhaps fortunate that we can only recommend. That power alone enables us to do sufficient harm. The specific proposals that reach us come either directly from individuals or departments or from the Committee of Six where many of them originate. Where individuals and departments are involved it is not always easy to clear both rocks of autonomy. Intended to promote intellectual life through scholarship and teaching our system in certain respects must approximate the self-contradictory state of a purposeful anarchy. We require differences and distinctions no less than conformities and agreements. Were we to be ideally neat we should also be ideally stupid. It is important that departments have plans which their constituent members can support; that these plans should bear some relation to those of other departments, and that the Committee should know them all. But every plan is vulnerable

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guishes Amherst College from state universities or technical schools. If these values do not exist, if the passion for knowledge (of which Professor Glaser speaks) consists in asking questions like a child, if the best that can be said for the exercise of the intelligence is that it is intellectual hedonism, if this College is but a further manifestation of Life Force, why, then, do we persist in using the antiquated and meaningless world *liberal?* What freedom of mind is this which Professor Glaser mentions if the mind is a slave to heredity, environment, economic forces, glands, the spirit of the age, neuroses, nature itself?

T. Baird

unless it provides for the growth of individual instructors. Granted that the bread and butter work must be done and done well, no department is 'delivering the goods' unless every member of the staff continues to develop his own personal resources. Whether we are assigned to elementary work or advanced, no teacher can successfully educate students if his own education is interrupted.

Among the proposals recommended by the Committee, four appear to us especially significant. Of these three have to do with integration of the students' work and one with the meaning of the word 'liberal'.

B. The Majors and Group Majors.

Legislation is discontinuous, but not necessarily the thought behind it. The recommendations that followed Professor Lamprecht's Academic Inventory of 1934 [4] permitted a wide latitude in the students' choice of studies, but superimposed on the then existing system of majors our present sequence requirement. The choices open to Freshmen remained limited, but to Sophomores and upper classmen we said: take anything you like provided it has this minimum of continuity. By forcing students and their advisors to consider each program in its entirety while discussing the elections for a given year, this mechanical device has had highly salutary effects.

Our next step was the subject major first proposed by Professor Whicher. Here the Faculty expressed its belief that the things that belong together are not necessarily present in the same department nor do they necessarily come in pairs. Given the chance, courses in American History; in the Economic History of the United States; in American Philosophy, Government, and Literature, will synthetize into a unity of higher order. The same idea underlies the Renaissance major proposed by Professor Elliott and adopted last year. In this constellation of studies there

4. Sterling Lamprecht, "An Academic Inventory" (mimeographed), copy in Curriculum File, Amherst College Archives. In brief, on recommendation of this one-man committee, the faculty in 1935 had abolished virtually all distribution requirements in favor of the "sequence plan" (See note 3 above, and for a detailed analysis, Elissa Tonkin, "The Development of the Amherst College Curriculum, 1923–1939" [Amherst College honors thesis, 1977], pp. 50–60).

are contributions from the departments of English, Fine Arts, German, History, Italian, and Philosophy.

The proponents of the group majors proposed to operate within the confines of existing requirements. The Committee undertook a study of majors in colleges reasonably comparable with Amherst and discovered that our own requirements were distinctly lower. We recommended the present five course major. This was adopted by the Faculty and in comparison with other institutions is conservative.

In the administration of the new requirement a departmental representative reviews with each student the subject matter of Junior and Senior years and the Senior year must contain an advanced if not a small culminating course. Although it is too early to praise or denounce, this development exhibits real continuity and has interesting consequences and implications. In the group majors departments agree not only to cooperate but to admit students whose affiliations are not departmental. In all likelihood this practise will relieve whatever stuffiness has developed behind closed doors. But the groups have begun to affect the entire system of majors. Departmental representatives cannot work effectively in isolation. The immediate result has been a species of synthetic advice which enables students to build group majors not formally announced. This being true the formulation of further group majors seems unnecessary and might defeat its own ends. After all courses are related only when somebody sees their relationship.

The demand for advanced courses preferably small in all majors and the existence of culminating courses together increase somewhat the available total of restricted courses and thereby preserve some of the advantages of a small college in a college which is no longer small.[5] But the culminating course affords peculiar opportunities for something new. In the past Amherst has been an originator in fields as widely apart as Physical Education and Library Technique. In time our culminating courses might transform into true seminars in which each student like the apprentices of the guilds could get the excitement, satisfac-

5. There were 869 undergraduates enrolled at Amherst College in the fall of 1938 (*Report of the President*, Amherst College, 1938–39, p. 12).

tion and discipline of producing what was known as his masterpiece. Now as then such work could signify no final mastery but only competence sufficiently secure to give the student and his teacher a solid confidence in the future.

Legislation also has unexpected consequences and may overshoot the mark. We have aimed deliberately to make Amherst safe for the better student. What about the restricted course and the average man? Conceivably as the number of such courses increases by the transformation of unrestricted ones, the survivors that remain open may easily swell to unmanageable proportions. If shifts of this type in any way reflect a natural distinction between pass-men and the others, it seems advisable to recognize the fact and provide for it by intention. Our students, their relatives and friends, would then experience no surprise when they discover on Commencement day that Amherst grants degrees affirming differences in accomplishment.

C. The Reading Period.

The reading period suggested by Professor Taylor is in its first semester. For the present it is little more than a hope and a symptom. As a symptom it indicates the open mind. The Faculty is willing to make experiments. As a hope it exhibits greater complexity. The time available is short—perhaps too short. Some of the courses in which the experiment is being made may not prove suitable. Conceivably some members of the Faculty will use the period to extend the dimensions of their courses; others will furnish opportunities and devices enabling the student to read and think his course together. It will be interesting to study the returns.

D. The Program for Dramatic Arts.

In February of the present year, at the height of an apparently successful sea on, the Curriculum Committee was defeated by the Program for Dramatic Arts. For the Committee the problems imbedded in this proposal involved the meaning of the word 'liberal'. As long as any impurities remain the reactions in which this word plays a part are apt to be slightly exothermic. Also in this particular case the Kirby meteor had fallen from an extracur-

ricular sphere.[6] The Committee agreed to present three opinions instead of one. Two of these favored the project. The Faculty voted to adopt the course.[7]

The most important aspect of this case is its vitality. Beginning with the lusty intramural debates of the Committee, continued by the Faculty, in meeting, and afterwards, and, reinforced by numerous informal interpretations of the vote, Dramatic Arts 1 has forced us to reconsider the fundamental tenets of our faith. No one maintains that all courses in a liberal program must be alike or that a course necessarily becomes illiberal the moment a student gains some firsthand knowledge of technique. Nevertheless, as we clarify our general aims and come to appreciate the exact nature and limited objectives of specific methods, the analysis of plays worthy to be studied as literature may appear as the natural antecedent to the technical studies and activities necessary to make these plays live on the stage. From such a union should issue a greater contribution to liberal education than from either type of course taken in isolation.

The Committee has made free use of the established platitudes. But now and again we must review the broader aspects of our problem. If such reviews produce criticism the Committee shall feel repaid; on the other hand if we are considered beneath criticism the Committee in part or whole is ready at any time to make way for greater competence.

6. Kirby Memorial Theater, a controversial addition to the college plant, was completed during the 1938–39 academic year.

7. "Introduction to the Art of the Theater," as proposed by Professor Curtis Canfield, was approved by the faculty on March 22, 1938, after rejection of an amendment offered by Professor George Roy Elliott of the English department that the course be given without academic credit. "Dramatic Arts" appeared as a separate subject in the catalogue for the first time in 1938–39.

The following brief statement by an informal group of faculty members gave organizational thrust to some of the reflections in the Curriculum Committee's "General Report." It was in the hands of the faculty before the discussion at the Faculty Club, December 12, 1938, when it presumably found strong support. It foreshadows the committee's report of January, 1939.

AMHERST COLLEGE
Amherst, Massachusets

Communication to the Curriculum Committee:*

We consider a liberal education to be that active and critical process by which the mind, through the grasp of a coherent body of significant knowledge, a growing comprehension of the existence and operation of objective principles and impersonal laws, frees itself from its original ignorance of time and place, its primitive satisfaction in the senses and emotions as such, and the personal biases which influence its thinking.

To widen the field of inquiry, to discourage those easy satisfactions which derive from following lines of immediate interest, and to further the acquisition of new tools for thought and the formation of wider syntheses, we propose the introduction of certain broad requirements in the curriculum.

We recommend the grouping of courses along three lines:

1) Mathematics and Natural Sciences. We should require the study of science, that our students may be incapable of gross errors of judgment about the physical world, about living beings, and about their past and present interrelations.

2) Social Studies and Philosophy. We should require students to become acquainted both with the history and with the processes of thought in the field which includes Philosophy, History, Politics, and Economics, in order to give them some insight into the thought of men and the structure of society as they have been and as they are.

3) Literature, Music, and Fine Arts. We should require coherent and historically significant study in the field of

* Forwarded to the faculty, December 6, 1938

Letters and Arts (Painting, Sculpture, Architecture, Music) to insure some understanding of the aesthetic cultures, past and present, and an appreciation of the importance of Form in all creative work.

The present reading requirement in French and German should be continued. We should teach foreign languages and have language requirements to insure that no student may escape with a degree who still believes (with most of his fellow-nationals) that God and the Holy Angels talk English.

We feel that Freshman and Sophomore years are the period when students should range widely and should be brought into contact with all of the broad fields of knowledge included in our curriculum. Each Freshman and Sophomore should elect each year one course from each group. This requirement of sequence within groups should supersede the present sequence in subjects.

In the Junior and Senior years the student is necessarily occupied in more specialized work. But that this specialization may not result in an excessive confining of the mind to fixed grooves, we recommend that one course in each year be elected outside the group in which the major lies. This requirement, together with the present five-course major, would supersede the existing course-sequence requirement.

We recognize fully the inadequacies of this proposal. We believe it more really liberal than what is now called "liberal" on the basis of an alleged "freedom" of choice. Choice is not free when the range of choice is unexplored and unknown. It is the function of the liberal college to require at least an intelligent consideration of a few of the fields of knowledge which the college, by the fact of its teaching them, has marked as significant.

GEOFFROY ATKINSON
RALPH A. BEEBE
GEORGE B. FUNNELL
GAIL KENNEDY
LAURENCE B. PACKARD
HAROLD H. PLOUGH
CHARLES L. SHERMAN

The proposals in this document (printed here out of chronological order) were presumably discussed at the December 12, 1938 meeting at the Faculty Club. In any case, this letter is clearly the forerunner of Part III of the next Curriculum Committee report. Richard MacMeekin, an Amherst graduate of 1934, was assistant dean from 1936 to 1946.

AMHERST COLLEGE
Amherst, Massachusetts

November 2, 1938

Dr. Otto C. Glaser
Chairman of Curriculum Committee
Amherst College
Amherst, Massachusetts

Dear Dr. Glaser:

In the short time that I have been connected with the Admissions Office, it has become apparent to me that our program of courses, making up the Freshman curriculum, is inadequate. I should like to propose certain changes both in the number and type of course offered for the first year. I am doing this not primarily to increase the number of selections, but rather to give more breadth and depth, not only to the first year, but to the year following.

The Freshman year, at the present time, is merely a period of marking time, in a great many instances. Not only does it lack balance, but constitutes a more or less barren area through which all Freshmen must pass in order to begin their college course, Sophomore year.

For the past two summers I have been engaged in attempting to outline first year course programs for, roughly, five hundred men, and have discovered that in a great many cases, some fifth course must be thrown into the program in order to make the schedule complete. This year, this tendency may be observed in the science selections and to some extent in first year language. I am not opposed to a candidate carrying two sciences or starting a first year language, if this is done in accordance with his program and his desires. How-

ever, I do not think it is an healthy thing for the College, or for any of the departments involved, to have men selecting certain fields merely in order to fill out a Freshman program.

The courses now offered are as follows: each Freshman elects five courses from this table,

English A,B,C	Latin	Mathematics 1 or 5	History	Biology
	Greek			Chemistry
	French			Physics
Public Speaking	German			

Physical Education required of all Freshmen.

I feel that those of the Faculty who have served as Faculty advisors for the last three or four years will understand the problem of distributing two hundred men over this rather narrow field of offerings. Following suggestions from the better schools and a study of first year courses offered at certain other institutions; namely, Williams, Harvard, Yale and Princeton, I wish to propose, for your Committee's consideration, that four new courses be added to the Freshman curriculum.

PROPOSED COURSES

1. Fine Arts I. A survey of the developments of Ancient and Mediaeval Art from the early Egyptian Dynasties to the culmination of the Gothic style; full year course; elective for Freshmen.

I have discussed this suggestion with Professor [Charles H.] Morgan. He feels that it would not only be beneficial to the College but would greatly strengthen the department of Fine Arts. At the present time, there is sufficient material in our Fine Arts I course, offered in Sophomore year, for two courses. Thus, the new Fine Arts I would not only make possible a more detailed study of the period covered, but would strengthen the study of the ancient classics, and offer a new exploration of them in the field of Fine Arts to Freshmen.

Fine Arts II, or the second Fine Arts course given Sophomore year, would then cover the material from the beginning of the Renaissance to Modern Times.

2. Music I. I have discussed this proposal with Professor [Vincent] Morgan and have received a letter from him stating that he is in favor of considering the matter of music course for Freshman year. I believe that if such a course were offered, he would contemplate giving the present Music I, the history and literature of Music.

With the increasing interest in music in the better preparatory schools, there is a definite need for a selection of this type in our Freshman curriculum. Not only will it place one more arts course in our Freshman year, but, at the same time, it will eliminate the necessity, for a boy, who is interested in music and who has had it at school, of waiting until his Sophomore year before being able to take a College course here at Amherst.

These two courses would be listed under a section entitled, Fine Arts and Music.

3. Classical Civilization. An historical survey of the cultural achievements of Greece and Rome, including the political, economic and literary contributions of the Classics to the Modern World.

I share the feeling of many other members of the Faculty that Amherst should offer a course answering the description of the one above. It is possible to place emphasis on the ancient classics in Freshman year through just such a course as this, as well as through Latin and Greek. I have discussed this matter with Professor [Charles L.] Sherman and found that he is definitely interested in the type of course described. This course, plus Fine Arts I, would certainly strengthen our classical tradition.

4. Government. The comparison of the United States, Great Britain and France with Russia, Italy and Germany. I realize that this subject is not a new one and that in many other institutions, courses comparable with this one are offered for the first and second year. Not only have large numbers of our first year men shown an interest in such a course, but there is increasing interest in the larger preparatory schools in this section.

These two courses would be listed under a section entitled History and Government.

The description of the last two courses is merely my suggestion. The content and presentation of them I leave to your Committee and the departments concerned.

I would propose that the Freshman curriculum, as changed, be presented as follows:

English* Public Speaking* 1	Foreign Languages 2	Mathematics 1	History Government 2	Fine Arts Music 1	Science 2
A. Survey	Latin A,	Mathematics 1	History 1	Music 1	Biology 1
B. Poetry & Prose	Greek 1,2	Mathematics 5	Government	Fine Arts 1	Chemistry 1
C. Composition Public Speaking	French 1,2,3, German A,1,2,3,		Classical Civilization		Physics 1

*English and Public Speaking required.
Physical Education required of all Freshmen.

The figure under each head indicates the number of courses the candidate is free to select from each division. English and the Modern Language courses have certain regulations governing the election of any one of the courses listed in the catalogue. A candidate may elect English 1a, but his final election is determined by his score on the Placement Examination given to all incoming Freshmen. Likewise, a reading examination controls the election and selection of courses in French or German. However, a candidate is free to select two courses from the foreign language bracket, is free to select one course from the mathematics group, is free to select two from the History and Government, is free to select one from Fine Arts and Music (in special cases a candidate should be permitted to select two from this section) and two from the science group. In all he must carry a program of five courses plus Public Speaking and Physical education. The possibility of a first year man concentrating too heavily in any combination of the divisions is fairly remote, when one considers the fact that before the final card is approved, his selections must be submitted to the Admissions office for consideration, to his Faculty Advisor, and finally to the Dean of the College.

It is highly important that the enthusiasm of the men in the entering class be maintained. It is certainly more important that they be offered a selection of College courses that will be a distinct departure from their preparatory school experience. The first year should be on such a level that it will demand a constant reaching on the part of the individual and at the same time will in some part be divorced from the run of the mill drill courses that he has gone through to enter College. It is true that a certain number of courses demand constant drill and text book discipline. Amherst, at the present time, has its full complement of this type, but it is also essential that the first year of college should include college courses that can be elected by the individual as he so wishes. In this category, I think that Amherst is behind, not only other institutions of its own class, but some of the better preparatory schools.

The courses suggested are all basic in nature, introductions to the fields represented and, being such, constitute a much needed improvement in the Freshman year. They fit in the sequence pattern. Not only would the first year curriculum be broadened, but the College would then present a more mature program to its entering students. It would widen the horizon of our Freshman year, but at the same time, would place definite limitations and restrictions on the selections for Freshman year, which would be determined by the program of courses to be followed in Sophomore year. Far more important, I think, is the fact that the number of courses upon which a student can build his subsequent college course is increased in this plan by four. I should hope that each one of the courses suggested would be distinctly a College course and a definite departure from preparatory school procedure.

I realize that this is the first time that the admissions office has proposed a series of suggestions involving more than one department for your consideration. However, it is a problem that deeply concerns the procedure of this office. I have presented all these suggestions to the Dean and to the departments concerned, with the exception of the proposed course in Government, before suggesting them to you, and sincerely hope that you will consider this problem, embracing the entire Freshman year, favorably.

Sincerely yours,
Richard MacMeekin
Assistant Dean

This plan for curricular reorganization, which followed the faculty discussions stimulated by the "General Report," was presented on January 4, 1939 to the Committee of Six. That committee agreed to recommend adoption of Parts I and II after "the divisions concerned" had responded to the suggestions in Part III. On January 23, 1939, the faculty voted all the recommendations in Part I. The number of subjects open to freshmen was expanded from eleven to eighteen, with new courses in anthropology, classical civilization, fine arts, music, and political science, and with astronomy and geology opened to freshman enrollment for the first time. The freshman year, earlier freed of most required courses, was now open to far more diverse course selection.

The faculty declined, however, to adopt the recommendations in Part II referring to "courses broad in scope" that introduced students to "each of the three major divisions." Nor was the recommendation that divisions identify certain courses as fulfilling requirement B adopted. Apparently, the faculty was resisting the creation of divisions as decision-making, organized entities, though willing to introduce them as a form of student course distribution.

Report of the Curriculum Committee on Regrouping of Courses*

TO THE COMMITTEE OF SIX,

GENTLEMEN:

The Curriculum Committee has received two independent yet closely related plans that involve a regrouping of courses. Both plans were discussed at the informal meeting of the Faculty on December 12th. Guided by that discussion, the Curriculum Committee recommends the following three point program:

* Written between December 13, 1938, and January 4, 1939

I.

A. The course of study shall be divided into three broad groups as follows:
   (1) Mathematics and Natural Science
   (2) Social Studies and Philosophy
   (3) Language, Literature, and the Arts

B. Each Freshman and Sophomore shall elect [each] year at least one course from each group.

C. Each Junior and Senior shall elect each year at least one course in a group outside his major.

II.

1. From among the courses in each division, the instructors in that division shall select those which will enable Freshmen and Sophomores to fulfill requirement B. The spirit of this requirement calls for courses broad in scope and by the nature of their subject matter suitable as introductions to the fields of knowledge and experience covered by each of the three major divisions. Courses not meeting this group requirement are to remain open to Freshmen and Sophomores for their fourth and fifth elections, as at present.

2. The division of Language, Literature, and the Arts will decide which language courses fulfill the spirit of requirement B. It appears sound that underclass men deficient in foreign language should not have as wide freedom of choice within this division as those who are better prepared.

III.

In accordance with this new arrangement, we recommend:

1. That the division of Social Studies and Philosophy consider the introduction into the Freshman year of two new courses:
   a) American Government
   b) Classical Civilization

2. That the division of Language, Literature, and the Arts, consider the introduction into the Freshman year of:
   a) Music
   b) Fine Arts

These recommendations are made in order that the Curriculum Committee may have the considered advice of each division before recommending to the Committee of Six, the addition of any new courses.

Signed for the Committee,
OTTO GLASER

NOTE: The science group has already recommended the following changes in the curriculum:

(1) It is recommended that Astronomy 1 and Geology 1 be open to Freshmen, to become effective during the academic year 1939–40.

(2) It is further recommended that a course in Anthropology be added to the curriculum to be open to Freshmen and to be given by Professor Plough during the academic year 1939–40.

The following caution, with its rather new equation of a small college with one that is qualitatively selective, shows concern that the move to increase course offerings might encroach on faculty time for creative scholarship. Any split of faculty on this issue could be easily overstated: Professor Plough, a signer of the letter of December 6, 1938 and initiator of the newly proposed freshman anthropology course, also signed this statement.

AMHERST COLLEGE
Amherst, Massachusetts

January 14, 1939

President Stanley King
Amherst College
Amherst, Massachusetts

Dear President King:

In discussions about the curriculum such as those now proceeding, an important principle seems to be frequently overlooked or at least violated in practice. The undersigned wish once more to state this principle, and request you to bring their statement to the attention of the Committee of Six and the Curriculum Committee and, if you are willing, of the Faculty too.

The principle comes from a simple explanation of what we may mean by a "small college." One might begin to define a small college in quantitive terms: that is, as a college in which a small faculty presents a small number of courses to a small number of students. The numbers by which Amherst elects to be small, however, are determined, not merely by chance or necessity, but by the application of the principle of selection for quality. The effort of the College has been to admit out of a large number of applicants those students who are considered most promising for qualitative learning, to appoint teachers of the highest quality it can find, and to offer the most suitable out of a much larger number of desirable courses.

Selection of faculty, courses, and students is in each case highly important. But the selection and maintenance of the faculty are perhaps most crucial. For the faculty has the obligation to determine what courses to select in the pursuit of intellectual quality; and the excellence of faculty is in last analysis the basic point in any consideration of how best to promote student welfare. The College must therefore never allow an expansion in number of courses to reach a point where an undue teaching load per man will dull the efforts for fresh investigation and creative scholarship, or where resources will be lacking to care for the interests of the present faculty and the securing of a competent future faculty.

Circumstances may at times demand expansion in number of courses. But such expansion is only rarely the way to quality, and is dangerous as a way to seek to remedy defects. Therefore every expansion should be made only upon application of the principle of selection for quality. Otherwise it is certain to bring on mediocrity. Seven new courses for freshman year were suggested in a recent report of the Curriculum Committee, though the suggestion was tentative and no one person may wish to sponsor the adoption of all seven courses at once. In connection with every one of these seven courses and any others that may be advocated, we urge the guidance of policy by the principle of selection for quality.

Respectfully yours,

O. MANTHEY-ZORN
S. P. LAMPRECHT
G. R. ELLIOTT
HAROLD H. PLOUGH
GEORGE F. WHICHER

Reflecting the concern of the preceding document for what has become known as "course proliferation," the following report of the Curriculum Committee was presented to the Committee of Six on March 8, 1939. At its meeting of March 21, apparently seeing no contradiction, the faculty voted both to accept this report and to approve an unusually large number of new courses.

CONCERNING COURSES: OLD AND NEW

The Curriculum Committee has brought before it an increasing number of problems on which it must make at least tentative and preliminary decisions. In order to make wise decisions it is necessary, as far as possible, to formulate general principles of action. Such principles must be subject to constant re-examination by the Committee and submission to the faculty as a whole in order to make sure that its will is being satisfactorily interpreted by the Committee. This report is a preliminary attempt to express our views on one subject which is of current importance and to submit it to the faculty for their information.

Each year one or more departments request that new courses be added to the curriculum. Obviously many considerations must be taken into account in deciding whether a new course should be offered. For example, questions are raised as to whether the subject matter is suitable for a small liberal college, whether in the judgment of his colleagues the instructor is competent to give the proposed course, whether it is desirable to increase the total number of courses offered, etc. It is concerning the last of these that we wish now to raise some questions.

The Committee believes that there is a real danger in multiplying courses. One feature which should distinguish the small liberal college from the University is that while the University offers a very large number of specialized courses the small college limits the number of such courses and does not permit the same degree of concentration or specialization in particular fields.

For one reason or another there is always pressure to increase the number of courses and this is especially true at Amherst at the present time as the student body has increased and the faculty has been and is being somewhat enlarged. What are the motives leading to this expansion in the number of courses offered? Let us examine each important one of these as objectively as possible.

1. Members of a department in a small college are always aware of the fact that important divisions of their subject are not fully covered in their curricular offerings. They are prone to feel that in order to present a well-rounded program to the student a course should be devoted to each one of these major fields. While this is a natural feeling we believe that such a tendency must be carefully watched. All important aspects of the subjects offered in the liberal college simply cannot be covered by full year courses. Even if there were sufficient instructors to make this possible, it probably would not be desirable. In addition to the introductory courses each department can hope to offer a limited number of advanced courses which are of the highest caliber. Two advanced courses which cover important aspects of a particular subject and are well given are much to be preferred, we believe, from the standpoint of the liberal college, to six or eight specialized courses which, if one looks at the catalogue, may seem to offer a well-rounded preparation in a particular subject.

2. Sometimes instructors are induced to offer additional courses because they are anxious to carry what they and perhaps their colleagues may regard as a full program. Naturally no one wishes to appear to be loafing. An instructor may appear to justify his existence on the Amherst College faculty by the number of hours per week he is teaching and may therefore be very anxious to carry what he regards as a "full" program. This tendency may, we believe, have most unfortunate results. The value of a man's teaching to Amherst College, is not correctly measured by the number of hours which he spends in the classroom. In fact, after a certain point at least the relationship between hours taught and the quality of the teaching may be an inverse one. We are of the opinion that in general most teachers will do their best work when teaching less than nine hours per week. Perhaps a normally desirable situation would be one in which the instructor offers two regular courses and participates in some conference or honors work in addition. Certainly one or two courses well taught may require more work on the part of the instructor and be more valuable to the college than three or four courses indif-

ferently given.

Obviously no simple formula can be drawn up to fit all cases. The teaching of elementary sections in most cases probably does not require as much time or preparation as the giving of advanced courses, but this is by no means always the case. Individual differences and variations in subject matter may be important. Certainly we would attempt to lay down no general rule, but we would emphasize the fact that to do his best work in the classroom, the teacher needs ample time a) to prepare his regular class work, and b) to constantly improve himself in his field through reading or research.

3. One of the most commendable reasons for offering additional courses is the desire to afford the student the opportunity of studying in small classes. In so far as this is the objective two considerations may well be borne in mind: First, such new courses if they are to achieve their purpose should usually be limited in size, and, second, it may be better to break up existing courses into sections rather than to create new ones. There is no reason why small limited advanced courses should not be given by two or even three men in a given department. While the general subject matter would be similar for each course the details covered, the emphasis and the interpretation might vary considerably depending upon the individual instructor.

4. A further reason for offering new courses arises when additional instructors are appointed to the staff. Into the complex and possibly delicate problems which may arise in this connection we do not propose to delve. We do wish to note, however, the tendency of the faculty automatically to vote new courses when new men are appointed. Within limits this is probably necessary and desirable but the tendency should be carefully watched. Despite what has sometimes been said to the contrary, the course of study at Amherst College has never been rigid or unchanging. Always certain departments have been expanding and others have been contracting or have actually disappeared. We regard change as normal and desirable, but reiterate our belief that in rapidly expanding departments as elsewhere we

should examine with great care, although by no means necessarily with disapproval, the addition of new courses.

Equally important with the problem of adding new courses is the question of dropping some which we now have. The existence of a course in our curriculum is not prima facie evidence that it is better than some new course which may be proposed. We need to re-examine our course-offerings from this point of view. In many ways, those most competent to judge the situation are the members of the department concerned. Unfortunately some myopia is to be expected when departments examine their own offerings. This must be corrected by the more impartial judgment of the faculty as a whole for there is clearly an occupational disease prevalent among teachers which leads the members of each department to magnify the importance of their own subject. Thus the economics department is almost inevitably over-impressed with the need for work in its field and teachers of biology cannot be expected to be without unscientific bias in appraising the importance of their own field. Nevertheless, believing that prejudice if recognized can be at least partially controlled, we strongly urge each department to consider during the next year whether some course or courses could not be profitably dropped. Such questions as these each department might well raise:

1. Have we courses that are too advanced or specialized to be essential to the course of study of a small liberal college? 2. On the other hand, do we offer courses that while enjoyable are merely popular or even to some extent trivial? 3. Have we added new courses when additional sections of old courses might have been better? 4. Have we added new and unnecessary courses merely to provide a "full" schedule for new appointees to the department? 5. Finally, and this is very important, are members of the department now teaching more hours than desirable from the standpoint of maximizing the quality of their teaching? If the answer to the last question is in the affirmative it seems most urgent to us that either or both of the following should be done: a. The department should drop the course or courses which seem least valuable, and, b. The need of additional instructors in the department should be formally presented to the administration

of the college and to the Committee of Six.

So much for matters of general policy. What now shall the Curriculum Committee do in respect of the unusually large number of new courses requested for this coming year? We are merely an advisory body. We have no plenary powers. So far as we are aware our only mandate is that we shall watch over the curriculum. In doing this we believe the faculty expects us not only to attempt general formulations of policy but also to make applications of policy to specific cases. If this is not a correct interpretation of our function we invite the faculty to formulate new and more specific directions as to our duties.

The following request not to issue a report suggests that the Curriculum Committee had entered a less influential period of its existence. It was largely through an ad hoc *committee headed by Dean C. Scott Porter that the degree with distinction was reformed, the faculty voting January 5, 1940, to unite the hitherto separate "Honors in a Special Subject," requiring independent work in the major department, and the degree differentiations of* cum laude, magna cum laude, *and* summa cum laude, *which had hitherto been based solely on over-all grade average. When Glaser left in the middle of 1939–40 for a semester of sabbatic leave, the Curriculum Committee was allowed to shrink temporarily to two members. In October 1941, President King appointed a Faculty Committee on Long Range Policy, indicating the need for a new source of innovation.*

In response to the following communication, the Committee of Six agreed that "the Curriculum Committee should not feel obligated to make formal reports to the faculty at stated intervals but only when the Curriculum Committee feels such reports are desirable."

Report of the Curriculum Committee on A General Report of the Curriculum Committee

TO THE COMMITTEE OF SIX

GENTLEMEN:

The Faculty originally demanded from the Curriculum Committee a minimum of one report for each of the three terms of the academic year.[8] Because of the multiplicity of reports normal for the second term, the third term was made exempt last year. Just now a report on Honors at Graduation is likely to fall into the first term and if forwarded to the Faculty would absolve the Curriculum Committee from the necessity of making any other report before the second term of the current year.

Some doubt has arisen concerning the fate of a new general report. The first general report, issued November 10, 1938, was intended to suggest some of the problems which the Curriculum Committee faces; to provoke faculty discussion of these problems; and to acquaint new members of the Faculty with the fact that Amherst has educational aspirations. We are quite certain that one of these aims was achieved, for Faculty interest in the curriculum has produced during the year many valuable suggestions.

Since some of these remain to be acted upon, the Curriculum Committee raises the question whether further provocation at this time might not prove inopportune. Were we to divide the Faculty on theoretical issues might we not jeopardize its probable unity on some of the practical measures likely to be submitted in the near future?

8. At this time all Amherst College courses extend throughout the year. This made it easier to refer to three "terms" (presumably the second term extended from the end of Christmas recess to the beginning of spring recess), even though the year was clearly broken into two "half-years" or "semesters" by midyear examinations and the midyear reading period.

Certain past and present members of the Curriculum Committee also feel that General Reports with purposes similar to those of last year's, if permissible, should be attributed to the individual primarily responsible and not implicate the Committee as a whole, but that joint general reports should not be excluded. The second type of general report might have a somewhat higher water-content as it might be the product of compromise.

The duties of the chairman in this, or for that matter in other connections, have never been defined either by the Committee of Six or the Curriculum Committee. So far his activities have been self-imposed or have been the outcome of natural cumulative growth. While this may have had certain advantages, no doubt there have been also disadvantages and at present the chairman is in doubt whether it is his duty or merely a privilege to release a general report. Perhaps it is neither. In any event, it has been suggested that the chairman might be permitted to make an individual report as a swan-song on retirement. This practice in combination with, or perhaps ultimately supplanted by, joint general reports from the Committee as a whole could be made to produce a general report of either type once in three years, provided the chairman is expected to serve in that capacity for three years. Even his tenure has never been defined.

The chairman is perhaps not alone when he expresses the belief as an individual that from time to time the Faculty should be informed about the state of mind that develops in the Curriculum Committee; what general problems or principles it discovers or evolves; how it envisages their solution or application; and that the Faculty in turn should have an opportunity to come back at the Committee and either accept or repudiate its small stock of ideas. Certainly the educational enterprise at Amherst can succeed only if we build into the Curriculum, somehow, with continuity the weighed opinions of a substantial majority of the Faculty.

The Curriculum Committee awaits some decision from the Committee of Six.

For the Curriculum Committee
OTTO GLASER

November 14, 1939